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THE FUR-TRADERS  
OF THE  
COLUMBIA-RIVER

IRVING



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- 

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
NEW YORK AND LONDON







# The Fur Traders

## Of the Columbia River and the Rocky Mountains

As Described by  
Washington Irving

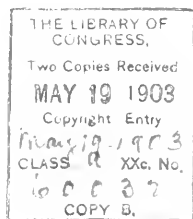
In his Account of "Astoria," and the Record of  
"The Adventures of Captain Bonneville"

With Some Additions by the Editor



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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

IRVING'S narratives depicting the facts and the romances of trapper life, and relating the efforts of organised fur trading in the Far West, present, in their particular field, the most interesting account yet produced of those fascinating phases of pioneer life. Irving infused the tragedy of *Astoria* with the patriotic interest that belonged to it, and that lifted it far above the level of mere commercial failure. In the *Adventures of Captain Bonneville* he drew a general picture of the mountain trading at the height of its greatest revival; and with the skill of an artist he fixed indelibly for the mind many interesting scenes that were destined soon to vanish.

Irving drew the materials for these two stories from a wide acquaintance with the prime movers in the great undertakings he described, and from much personal and private information that is no longer available. In fact, his interest in the fur traders amounted to a passion that kept him in touch with the whole movement of affairs on the frontier.

In spite, however, of his intimate knowledge of the men and their deeds, Irving admitted that it was "difficult to do justice to the courage and perseverance of the pioneers of the fur trade, who first broke their way through a wilderness where everything was calculated to deter and dismay them, who traversed the most desolate mountains and launched themselves in frail canoes without knowing whither the swift current would carry

them, nor what rocks and rapids they might encounter in their course. The mountain tribes, too, beset their path, or attacked them in their night encampments; so that of the bands of hardy trappers that first entered those regions, three fifths are said to have fallen by the hands of savage foes."

That the record of such men and of such deeds became interesting and readable under the pen of Irving is a fact creditable to that writer and fortunate for the student; and it should have given no offence to the ponderous historian who staked out trans-Mississippi as his particular "claim." So it is now recorded with particular satisfaction that a recent examination, by a competent authority,<sup>1</sup> has established beyond question Irving's accuracy and sound judgment.

The nature of the present volume has prevented anything more than a reference to the other daring enterprises in the regions that are the wonderland of the world, and are still the borderland of romance. In order, however, that the reader may get a suggestion of the activities growing out of the rich rewards of the fur trade, he is provided with a table of Important Events, which has been greatly enriched by names and dates drawn from the recent researches of Captain Chittenden, whose extensive and original investigations have resulted in a well-rounded and accurate history of the fur trade of the Far West. The editor's thanks are gladly paid him for these helps and for the many illuminating side-lights on the text.

F. L. O.

PINE LODGE, 1903.

<sup>1</sup> *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, by Hiram Martin Chittenden, Captain Corps of Engineers, U. S. A., pp. 239-246 and 432-433.

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## IMPORTANT EVENTS

- 1670—THE HUDSON BAY COMPANY is chartered by Charles II. for the purpose of purchasing skins and furs from the Indians of British North America.
- 1762—France loses possession of Canada.  
Overland trade with Santa Fé began somewhat before this date.
- 1763—*John Jacob Astor* is born in Walldorf, Germany.
- 1764—MAXENT, LACLEDE, AND COMPANY, of New Orleans, establish a trading-post and village which they name St. Louis, having been granted by Louis XV. a monopoly of the trade on the Missouri and Mississippi rivers.
- 1783—*J. J. Astor* sails for Baltimore; begins his career as a fur merchant.
- 1787—THE NORTHWEST COMPANY is formed at Montreal by successful Scotch merchants who have been independent dealers in furs. *Alexander Mackenzie*, a partner, begins explorations which bring him to the Pacific in 1793. The company employs David Thompson to survey the 49th parallel (the international boundary later), and to locate trading-posts.
- 1792—The Columbia River is discovered by Captain Gray in the ship *Columbia*.
- 1798—THE RUSSIAN-AMERICAN FUR COMPANY is organised for trade along the north-west coast of North America. It selects Sitka for its port of deposit and trade.
- 1803—THE PURCHASE OF LOUISIANA from France. The territory comprised nearly the entire region from the Mississippi to the crest of the Rocky Mountains, and from Texas to Canada.

1804-6—THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION to the mouth of the Columbia River and return, opening up the great fur-producing region of the country.

1804-10—*John Coulter*, having accompanied *Lewis* and *Clark*, returns to the mountains to trap. Meets *Lisa*. "Coulter's Route in 1807." Discovers the Yellowstone Wonderland; escapes from the Blackfeet; returns to St. Louis in 1810, alone in a canoe, 3000 miles in 30 days.

1806-7—PIKE'S EXPLORATIONS through Kansas and Colorado, and southward to Santa Fé. Pike's Peak. *Baptiste Le Lande*. *James Purcell*. Spanish expedition, under *Malgares* far into the territory of the United States.

1807—*Manuel Lisa* ascends the Missouri and Yellowstone, building his post, Fort Lisa, near the mouth of the Big Horn; repeats the trip almost yearly until 1820.

A small detachment of troops is sent to conduct to his home the Mandau chief who was brought down the river by Lewis and Clark. The soldiers are beaten back by the Aricaras and are forced to return.

1808—THE MISSOURI FUR COMPANY is begun by Auguste Chouteau, Jr., Pierre Chouteau, Sr., William Clark (Lewis and Clark), Andrew Henry, and others. Its history is that of its moving spirit, *Manuel Lisa*. Its first expedition, in 1809, is an unusually strong one for the purpose of establishing many posts, and to restore to his people the Mandan chief mentioned above.

The company is reorganised in 1812 and again in 1819.

THE AMERICAN FUR COMPANY is incorporated by *John Jacob Astor* to comprise all his operations in different parts of the country.

1810—The Blackfeet Indians make repeated attacks on the post of the Missouri Fur Company at the Three Forks of the Missouri, driving Andrew Henry thence over the Divide to the north branch of the Snake River. He returns to St. Louis the next year (1811).

**THE PACIFIC FUR COMPANY** (*i.e.*, The American Fur Company) is organised, being recruited largely from the Northwest Company, which refuses Mr. Astor's offer of an alliance.

*The Sea Expedition* of the Pacific Fur Company sets sail September 6th, in the ship *Tonquin*, and reaches the Columbia River, March 25, 1811. After ASTORIA is established, the *Tonquin* is sent on a trading voyage to the northward. In Nootka Sound, Vancouver Island, the ship is attacked by treacherous Indians, and is destroyed together with all on board.

*The Overland Expedition* of the Pacific Fur Company, under the command of *Wilson P. Hunt*, starts from St. Louis, October 21, 1810; winters near the present St. Joseph, Missouri, and sets out again April 21, 1811. They race to keep ahead of *Lisa*; procure horses of the Aricaras and proceed by land; reach Henry's abandoned fort, October 11th. Losses and disasters in descending the Snake River; separation into numerous small parties, most of which reach Astoria by the 15th of February, 1812.

1811—*Mr. Astor* and certain partners in the Northwest Company buy out the Mackinaw Company (another British company operating around the Great Lakes and the sources of the Mississippi River) and form it into the SOUTHWEST COMPANY.

A conflict is precipitated in the rivalry between the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Company by the former granting the Red River Valley (near Lake Winnipeg) to *Lord Selkirk*.

1812—The annual ship, the *Beaver*, reaches ASTORIA, May 10th. *Reed* visits the caches; *Robert Stuart* starts overland to carry reports to New York; and *Hunt* sails for New Archangel to carry out the arrangement with the Russian Fur Company.

1813—The partners at Astoria learn of the DECLARATION OF WAR against Great Britain, and on July 1st they publicly announce their intention to abandon the enterprise. *Hunt* is delayed; the annual ship, the *Lark*, is

## Important Events

wrecked sale of all the property of the Pacific Fur Company to the Northwest Company. October 30th. arrival of the British frigate *Talisman*. October 30th.

1811—April 30. *Flour* sells for New York with the remnant of the Astorians who did not enter the employment of the Northwest Company.

1811—Congress excludes foreigners from participation in the fur trade of the United States except in subordinate capacities. *Mr. Astor* takes over the business of the Northwest Company lying within the boundaries of the United States and merges that and his own South-west Company in the American Fur Company but fails to get the necessary military support for re-occupying Astoria and the Columbia Valley.

1811—By treaty with Great Britain the country on the north-west coast of America westward of the Rocky Mountains claimed by either country is to be opened for ten years for the purposes of trade to the inhabitants of both the United States and Great Britain with equal right of navigating all its rivers. This arrangement is renewed without change in 1825.

1810-21—*Long's Expedition* a thousand men and five steam-boats starts for the Yellowstone to clear the Upper Missouri from British traders and to free the Indians from foreign influence. It proves a complete failure reaching only the present site of Omaha and returning from there the following spring when Congress refuses a further appropriation.

1821—Death of *Manuel Liso* just at the beginning of the revival in the fur trade. *Joshua Packer* succeeds him as the head of the Missouri Fur Company.

1821—Absorption of the Northwest Company by the Hudson Bay Company. They abandon Astoria and build Fort Vancouver a hundred miles farther up the Columbia opposite the mouth of the Willamette River.

Parliament excludes Americans from the Canadian fur trade.

The American Fur Company withdraws from its territory east of Lake Huron.

THE COLUMBIA FUR COMPANY is formed by James Remond and other experienced men, who were displaced by the consolidation of the Northwest Company with the Hudson Bay Company. It competes actively with the American Fur Company in the upper valleys of the Mississippi and Missouri.

1822—*William H. Ashley* leads his first expedition to the Missouri under the command of *Andrew Henry*. Severe losses of goods, horses, and men. The first use of South Pass.

The American Fur Company establishes an Western Department at St. Louis, in the hands of Boone, Bostwick, and Company, but changes it a year to Bernard, Frette and Company.

1823—*Ashley* having accompanied *Henry* to the mouth of the Yellowstone, returns and organises another party, which is badly defeated by the Indians, with the loss of fourteen men. *Colonel Leavenworth* leads a retaliatory expedition against the Indians, but accomplishes nothing.

*Fitcher* sends out a large trading party, which is ambushed by the Blackfeet, five killed, Jones and Immel, and four wounded. Owing to the heavy money loss on this expedition and later ones, the Missouri Fur Company becomes extinct about 1830.

1824—*Etienne Provost*, having charge of one of *Ashley's* parties, is treacherously attacked on the shores of Flat Lake, and loses nearly all his men.

*Ashley* revises the *rendezvous* to take the place of the post system of trade.

1824-1825—Years of the greatest activity in the Santa Fé trade, which is carried on entirely by individual traders. Government survey of the Santa Fé Trail in 1825. The trade is prohibited in 1825.

1824-25—*Ashley* sends *Henry* October to the mountains, and follows November with another party, ascending the

Platte; winters on the Green River, where *Provost* finds him. He explores to the west and south of the Great Salt Lake; secures a wonderfully rich cargo of furs, which he embarks for St. Louis via the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, utilising the troops of the Yellowstone Expedition as an escort from the mouth of the Yellowstone. The *rendezvous for 1825* is held in the Green River Valley.

1825—*Yellowstone Expedition* is authorised by Congress for the purpose of making treaties with the Indians along the Missouri, who had been restless and troublesome since 1812. General *Henry Atkinson* and Major *O'Fallon* are successful in their negotiations.

1826—*Ashley* makes his last trip to the mountains, taking with him a wheeled caannon (first vehicle) to his post on Utah Lake. He sells out his fur business to *Smith, Jackson, and Sublette*, who had been active partisans.

1826-29—*Smith* starts from the *rendezvous* in Cache Valley; explores the Colorado River; and crosses the deserts to San Diego, Cal. He returns nearly alone to the *rendezvous for 1827* at Great Salt Lake; then recrosses to California, losing ten men at the hands of the Mojave Indians, who are incited by the Spanish authorities; forfeits all his property and is released from arrest on condition of leaving the country; gathers his men and slowly ascends the Sacramento (winter 1827-28); is attacked by Indians in July, 1828, and escapes alone, making his way to Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia; recovers his furs with the aid of the Hudson Bay Company, and returns to his partners in the spring of 1829, after a severe fight with the Blackfeet Indians.

1827—The Columbia Fur Company is transferred to the American Fur Company, retaining its organisation; thereafter known as the UPPER MISSOURI OUTFIT, the "U. M. O."

1828—Fort Floyd (afterward called Union) is built at the mouth of the Yellowstone.

1830—Sublette reinforces his partners at the *rendezvous* on the

Wind River with a force of eighty-one men and ten waggons (the first used on the Oregon Trail). The partners sell out to *Fitzpatrick*, *M. G. Sublette*, *Fraeb*, *Gervais*, and *Bridger*,—the ROCKY MOUNTAIN FUR COMPANY.

1831—*Smith*, *Jackson*, and *Sublette* enter the Santa Fé trade, sending out twenty waggons. *Smith* is killed by the Comanches in the Cimarron Desert. *Fitzpatrick* takes this roundabout way to bring out supplies, and is so delayed by the trouble in which *Smith* perishes that he arrives too late for the rendezvous.

1832—The famous *rendezvous at Pierre's Hole*, July 8th–17th. Present two hundred trappers of the *Rocky Mountain Fur Company*, a large party of the *American Fur Company*, *N. J. Wyeth*, with his New Englanders, and many Indians and free trappers. *Captain Bonneville* is approaching. Competition is keen and threatens to be ruinous.

*The Battle of Pierre's Hole* (Teton Basin), July 18th.

A detachment returning from *Wyeth's* party is attacked by Blackfeet, July 25th.

Voyage of the steamer *Yellowstone* from St. Louis to the mouth of the Yellowstone and return, April 16th–July 7th. *George Catlin*.

Congress forbids the importation of liquor into the Indian country. *M'Kenzie* orders a complete still for use at Fort Union.

1832–35—Four Nez Percé Indians visit St. Louis in the fall to get instruction in the Christian religion. The Methodists send *Jason* and *Daniel Lee* (1834) under the protection of *Wyeth's* party. In 1835 *Marcus Whitman* and *Samuel Parker* go as missionaries.

1832–35—*Captain Bonneville* reaches the Green River July 27th; builds Fort Bonneville; but winters on the Salmon River. Meets *Wyeth* (1833); Green River *rendezvous*; sends out the *Walker Expedition* (July 24, 1833–June 1, 1834); despatches *Cerré* to St. Louis with furs; winters on the Portneuf River. Makes a personal trip down the Columbia (Christmas, 1833–May

- 12, 1834); *rendezvous* in the Bear River Valley (1834); despatches *Walker* and *Cerré* with the year's furs; winters on the Bear River. Again visits the Columbia (1835); meets his men at the Forks of the Wind River; and returns to the settlements, August 22, 1835.
- 1832-36—*N. J. Wyeth* forms a company for trading in the valley of the Columbia; starts from Boston with twenty men; present at battle of *Pierre's Hole*; reaches Fort Walla Walla, October 14th. Mountain journey (1833); meets *Bonneville*; bull-boat trip. Brings out merchandise (1834) for the Rocky Mountain Fur Company; builds Fort Hall and Fort William. Explorations (1835). Returns to Cambridge in 1836.
- 1833—*Rendezvous* at the head of the Green River (June 15th-24th). The contract with *Wyeth*. *Fitzpatrick* is robbed of all his goods and horses (100) by the Crows.  
*The Battle of Fort M'Kenzie*, seven killed, twenty wounded. *Maximilian*, Prince of Wied, ascends the Missouri and winters at Fort Clark.  
*Wyeth* reports illicit distilling at Fort Union.
- 1834—The Rocky Mountain Fur Company is dissolved at the *rendezvous* on the Green River, having repudiated its contract with *Wyeth*.  
*Mr. Astor* sells the American Fur Company (Northern Department) to *Ramsay Crooks*, and the Western Department to *Pratte, Chouteau, and Company*.  
*M'Kenzie* retires from Fort Union in consequence of the distillery episode.  
*Colonel Dodge* conducts a military expedition from Fort Gibson to reduce the Indians along the Santa Fé route.
- 1836-40—*J. N. Nicollet* carries on valuable and accurate explorations in the valleys of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers; is accompanied by *John C. Frémont*.
- 1837—Smallpox is introduced all along the Missouri by the steamboat of the American Fur Company; and it almost destroys the Mandans and many other tribes, and has a disastrous effect upon the fur traders.
- 1838—*Father De Smet* begins his work among the Indians.



PIERRE CHOUTEAU, JR., AND COMPANY succeed the firm of Pratte, Chouteau, and Company.

1842—*Frémont's* first expedition to the Rocky Mountains; he examines South Pass and the Wind River Mountains. *Frémont's Peak* (13,570 feet).

1842-43—*Whitman* makes his romantic return to the States in the dead of winter via Santa Fé.

1843—*James Bridger* builds Fort Bridger for the accommodation of immigrants.

The naturalist, *Audubon*, ascends the Missouri in the annual steamer, *Omega*, of the "U. M. O."

*The Blackfoot Massacre* at Fort M'Kenzie, planned by *Harvey* and *Chardon*.

1843-44—*Frémont* explores the region of the Great Salt Lake, descends the Columbia, and returns by the way of California to Kansas.

1845—*Harvey, Primeau, and Company*, former employees of the American Fur Company, carry on an effective opposition to the older company.

1846—*Frémont* frees Northern California from Mexican rule (Mexican War) and is elected Governor by the American settlers. He is appointed commissioner in 1849 to run the boundary line between the United States and Mexico.

1859—Expiration of the charter and the license of the Hudson Bay Company. Its territory is opened to all alike. It cedes its territorial possessions, the Hudson Bay Territory, to the Dominion of Canada in 1870.

1867—The Russian-American Fur Company sells its property and rights to the United States at the same time that Alaska is transferred.



# THE FUR TRADERS OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER

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## CHAPTER I

### THE NORTHWEST COMPANY

TWO leading objects of gain gave birth to wide and daring enterprise in the early history of the Americas: the precious metals of the South, and the rich peltries of the North. While the fiery and magnificent Spaniard, inflamed with the mania for gold, extended his discoveries and conquests over those brilliant countries scorched by the ardent sun of the tropics, the adroit Frenchman, the calculating Briton, and the plodding Dutchman, pursued the traffic in furs amidst the more northern regions until they advanced even within the Arctic Circle.

The French adventurers, who settled on the banks of the St. Lawrence, soon found that, in the rich peltries of the interior, they had sources of wealth that rivalled the mines of Mexico and Peru. The trade increased, and was drawn from remote regions to Montreal; and there grew up with this trade a new class of men, the rangers of the woods (*coureurs de bois*), who became,

as it were, the peddlers of the wilderness. These loose adventurers gradually corrupted the Indians and were forbidden to trade into the interior of the country without a license.

At length it was found necessary to establish fortified posts at the confluence of the rivers and the lakes for the protection of the trade, and the restraint of these profligates of the wilderness. The most important of these was at Mackinac, an island situated at the strait of the same name which connects Lakes Huron and Michigan. Here new expeditions were fitted out and took their departure for Lake Michigan and the Mississippi, Lake Superior and the Northwest; and here the peltries brought in return were embarked for Montreal.

The French traders at first had matters quite their own way along the St. Lawrence and the Lakes, as did the Dutch East India Company in New Netherland with its chief posts at Beaverwyck (Albany) and New Amsterdam (New York). After New Netherland fell into the hands of the English (1664), the Canadian traders found troublesome competitors in the British merchants of New York, who inveigled the Indians and the *coureurs de bois* to their posts, and traded with them on more favourable terms. A still more formidable opposition was organised in the Hudson Bay Company, chartered by Charles II., in 1670, with the exclusive privilege of establishing trading-houses on the shore of Hudson Bay and its tributary rivers; a monopoly which was maintained until 1859.

In 1763 the French lost possession of Canada, and the fur trade fell principally into the hands of British subjects. It was then pursued with much eagerness by individual merchants who injured the trade by

their attempts to outbid and undermine each other; the Indians were debauched by liquors; while bloody feuds took place between rival trading parties, when they happened to meet in the lawless depths of the wilderness.

To put an end to this ruinous strife, several of the principal merchants of Montreal formed a partnership in the winter of 1783, which, by being merged in a rival company in 1787, became the famous "Northwest Company." This for a time held lordly sway over the wintry lakes and boundless forests of Canada.

To behold the Northwest Company in all its state and grandeur, it was necessary to witness an annual gathering at Fort William, near what is called the Grand Portage, on Lake Superior. Here two or three of the leading partners from Montreal proceeded once a year to meet the partners from the various trading-posts of the wilderness, to discuss the affairs of the company during the preceding year, and to arrange plans for the future.

The partners from Montreal, however, quite eclipsed their compeers from the woods, whose forms and faces had been battered and hardened by hard living and hard service, and whose garments and equipments were all the worse for wear. Indeed the partners from below considered the whole dignity of the company as represented in their persons, and conducted themselves in suitable style. They ascended the rivers in great state, like sovereigns making a progress. They were wrapped in rich furs, their huge canoes freighted with every convenience and luxury, and manned by Canadian *voyageurs*, as obedient as Highland clansmen. Happy were they, too, if they could meet with some distinguished stranger; above all, some titled member

of the British nobility, to accompany them on this stately occasion, and grace their high solemnities.

Fort William, the scene of this important annual meeting, was a considerable village on the banks of Lake Superior. Here, in an immense wooden building, was the great council hall, as also the banqueting chamber, decorated with Indian arms and accoutrements, and the trophies of the fur trade. Grave and weighty councils were alternated by huge feasts and revels. The tables in the great banqueting-room groaned under the weight of game of all kinds, and there was no stint of generous wine; for it was a time of loyal toasts and brimming bumpers.

While the chiefs revelled in hall, and made the rafters resound with bursts of loyalty and old Scottish songs, chanted in voices cracked and sharpened by the northern blast, their merriment was echoed and prolonged by a mongrel legion of retainers, Canadian *voyageurs*, half-breeds, Indian hunters, and vagabond hangers-on, who feasted sumptuously without on the crumbs that fell from their table, and made the welkin ring with old French ditties, mingled with Indian yelps and yellings.

The success of the Northwest Company stimulated further enterprise in this opening and apparently boundless field of profit. The traffic of that company lay principally in the high northern latitudes, while there were immense regions to the south and west, known to abound with valuable peltries; but which, as yet, had been but little explored by the fur trader. A new association of British merchants was therefore formed to prosecute the trade in this direction, and it was commonly called the Mackinaw Company, from the fact that its chief factory was on Mackinac Island.

The Government of the United States began to view with a wary eye the growing influence thus acquired by combinations of foreigners over the aboriginal tribes inhabiting its territories, and endeavoured to counteract it. For this purpose, as early as 1796, the government sent out agents to establish rival trading-houses on the frontier, so as to supply the wants of the Indians, to link their interests and feelings with those of the people of the United States, and to divert this important branch of trade into national channels. The expedition, however, was unsuccessful; but what the government failed to effect with all its patronage and all its agents was at length brought about by the enterprise and perseverance of a single merchant, one of its adopted citizens.

John Jacob Astor, the individual in question, was born in the honest little German village of Waldorf, near Heidelberg, on the banks of the Rhine. He, while yet a mere stripling, left his home, and launched himself amid the busy scenes of London. At the close of the American Revolution he was still in London; but he had already determined to follow an older brother and to seek his fortune in the United States. Investing a small sum in merchandise suited to the American market, he embarked, in 1783, in a ship bound to Baltimore.

On the way Mr. Astor became acquainted with a countryman of his, a furrier by trade, who cheerfully gave him all the information in his power as to the quality and value of different furs, and the mode of carrying on the traffic. He subsequently accompanied him to New York, and, by his advice, Mr. Astor was induced to invest the proceeds of his merchandise in furs. With these he sailed from New York to London in

1784, disposed of them advantageously, made himself further acquainted with the course of the trade, and returned the same year to New York.

As yet, trade in peltries was not organised in the United States, and could not be said to form a regular line of business. Furs and skins were casually collected by the country traders in their dealings with the Indians or the white hunters, but the main supply was derived from Canada. As Mr. Astor's means increased, he made annual visits to Montreal, where he purchased furs from the houses engaged in the trade.

In 1795, a treaty with Great Britain removed the restrictions imposed upon the trade with the colonies, and opened a direct commercial intercourse between Canada and the United States. Mr. Astor was in London at the time, and immediately made a contract with the agents of the Northwest Fur Company for furs. He was now enabled to import them from Montreal into the United States for the home supply, and to ship them thence to different parts of Europe, as well as to China, which has ever been the best market for the richest and finest kinds of peltry.

The treaty in question provided, likewise, that the military posts occupied by the British within the territorial limits of the United States should be surrendered. Accordingly Oswego, Niagara, Detroit, Mackinac, and other posts on the American side of the Lakes, were given up, and an opening was thus made for American merchants. After an interval of some years, about 1807, Mr. Astor embarked in this trade on his own account. His capital and resources had by this time greatly augmented, and he had risen from small beginnings to take his place among the first merchants and financiers of the country.



He was aware of the wish of the American Government, already stated, that the fur trade within its boundaries should be in the hands of American citizens, and of the ineffectual measures it had taken to accomplish that object. He now offered, if aided and protected by the government, to turn the whole of that trade into American channels ; and to that end he obtained, in 1809, a charter from the legislature of the State of New York, incorporating a company under the name of the American Fur Company.

As the Mackinaw Company still continued its rivalry, and as the fur trade would not advantageously admit of competition, he bought out the Mackinaw Company, in 1811, and merged that into what might be called the Northern Department of the American Fur Company, to be known as the Southwest Company.

## CHAPTER II

### THE AMERICAN FUR COMPANY

WHILE the various companies we have noticed were pushing their enterprises far and wide in the wilds of Canada, and along the course of the great western waters, other adventurers, intent on the same objects, were traversing the watery wastes of the Pacific and skirting the north-west coast of America.

Among the American ships which traded along the north-west coast in 1792 was the *Columbia*, Captain Gray, of Boston. In the course of her voyage she discovered the mouth of a large river in lat.  $46^{\circ} 19'$  north. Entering it with some difficulty, on account of sand-bars and breakers, she came to anchor in a spacious bay. A boat was well manned and sent on shore to a village on the beach, but all the inhabitants fled excepting the aged and infirm. The kind manner in which these were treated, and the presents given to them, gradually lured back the others, and a friendly intercourse took place. They had never seen a ship or a white man.

Captain Gray did not ascend the river farther than the bay in question, which continues to bear his name. After putting to sea, he fell in with the celebrated discoverer, Vancouver, and informed him of his discovery, furnishing him with a chart which he had made of the river. Vancouver visited the river, and his lieutenant,

Broughton, explored it by the aid of Captain Gray's chart; ascending it upwards of one hundred miles, until within view of a snowy mountain, to which he gave the name of Mount Hood. This it still retains.

After a time the attention of the American Government was attracted to the subject of an overland route to the Pacific, and the memorable expedition under Messrs. Lewis and Clark was fitted out. These gentlemen, in 1804, ascended the Missouri, passed through the stupendous gates of the Rocky Mountains, hitherto unknown to white men, discovered and explored the upper waters of the Columbia, and followed that river down to its mouth, where their countryman, Gray, had anchored about twelve years previously. Here they passed the winter, and returned across the mountains in the following spring. Their reports demonstrated the practicability of establishing a line of communication across the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

It was then that the idea presented itself to the mind of Mr. Astor of grasping with his individual hand this great enterprise, namely, to establish a line of trading posts along the Missouri and the Columbia, to the mouth of the latter, and to found there the chief trading-house or mart. There, too, coasting craft would be built and fitted out to trade, at favourable seasons, all along the north-west coast, and return, with the proceeds of their voyages, to this place of deposit. A ship was to be sent annually from New York to this main establishment with reinforcements and supplies, and with merchandise suited to the trade. It would take on board the furs collected during the preceding year, carry them to Canton, invest the proceeds in the rich

merchandise of China, and return thus freighted to New York.

Mr. Astor now prepared to carry his scheme into prompt execution. He had some competition, however, to apprehend and guard against. The Northwest Company had pushed one or two advance trading posts across the Rocky Mountains, into a tract of country about two degrees north of the Columbia, and lying between the territories of the United States and those of Russia. But their posts beyond the mountains had to be supplied in yearly expeditions, like caravans, from Montreal, and the furs conveyed back in the same way, by long, precarious, and expensive routes across the continent. Mr. Astor, on the contrary, would be able to supply his proposed establishment at the mouth of the Columbia by sea, and to ship the furs collected there directly to China, so as to undersell the Northwest Company in the great Chinese market.

Still, the competition of two rival companies west of the Rocky Mountains could not but prove detrimental to both, and fraught with those evils, both to the trade and to the Indians, that had attended similar rivalries in the Canadas. To prevent any contest of the kind, therefore, he made known his plan to the agents of the Northwest Company, and proposed to interest them, to the extent of one-third, in the trade thus to be opened. After some negotiation and delay, they declined the proposition, but subsequently despatched a party for the mouth of the Columbia to establish a post there before any expedition sent out by Mr. Astor might arrive.

In the meantime Mr. Astor, finding his overtures rejected, proceeded fearlessly to execute his enterprise in face of the whole power of the Northwest Company

He now proceeded to procure proper agents and coadjutors, habituated to the Indian trade and to the life of the wilderness. Among the clerks of the Northwest Company were several of great capacity and experience, who had not been promoted, and were consequently ready for any employment in which their talents and acquirements might be turned to better account.

On the 23rd of June, 1810, the articles of agreement of the Pacific Fur Company were entered into between Mr. Astor and four gentlemen, Alexander M'Kay, Duncan M'Dougal, Donald M'Kenzie, and Wilson Price Hunt of New Jersey. The first three of these were drawn from the Northwest Company, but Mr. Hunt was a successful business man in St. Louis, a person of great worth, who was selected by Mr. Astor to represent him in the new establishment.

Mr. Astor was to furnish all the capital for the company, was to be its head, and was to have fifty shares of its stock, the other fifty being divided among the partners and their associates. He was to furnish vessels, goods, provisions, arms, ammunition, and all other requisites, and was to bear all losses of the first five years—a period within which the company might be dissolved, if it should be found unprofitable.

In prosecuting this great scheme of commerce and colonisation, two expeditions were devised, one by sea, the other by land. The former was to carry out the people, stores, ammunition, and merchandise requisite for establishing a fortified trading post at the mouth of Columbia River. The latter, conducted by Mr. Hunt, was to proceed up the Missouri and across the Rocky Mountains, by the route of Lewis and Clark, to the same point; exploring a line of communication across

the continent, and noting the places where interior trading posts might be established.

A fine ship was provided, called the *Tonquin*, of two hundred and ninety tons burden, mounting ten guns, with a crew of twenty men. She carried an assortment of merchandise for trading with the natives of the seaboard and of the interior, together with the frame of a schooner to be employed in the coasting trade. Seeds also were provided for the cultivation of the soil, and nothing was neglected for the necessary supply of the establishment. The command of the ship was intrusted to Jonathan Thorn, of New York, a lieutenant in the United States Navy on leave of absence, a man of courage and firmness, who had distinguished himself in our Tripolitan war.

Beside four partners, M'Kay, M'Dougal, David Stuart, and his nephew, Robert Stuart, there were twelve clerks to go out in the ship, several of them natives of Canada, who had some experience in the Indian trade. Several artisans were likewise to sail in the ship, for the supply of the colony; but the most peculiar and characteristic part of this motley embarkation consisted of thirteen *voyageurs*, who were to be employed in long internal expeditions of travel and traffic.

The *voyageurs* were determined to regale and astonish the people of the "States" with the sight of a Canadian boat and a Canadian crew. They accordingly fitted up a large but light bark canoe, such as is used in the fur trade; transported it in a waggon from the banks of the St. Lawrence to the shores of Lake Champlain; traversed the lake in it, from end to end; hoisted it again in a waggon and wheeled it off to Lansingburg, and there launched it upon the waters

of the Hudson. Down this river they plied their course merrily on a fine summer's day, making its banks resound for the first time with their old French boat songs; passing by the villages with whoop and halloo, so as to make the honest Dutch farmers mistake them for a crew of savages. In this way they swept, in full song and with regular flourish of the paddle, round New York, in a still summer evening, to the wonder and admiration of its inhabitants, who had never before witnessed on their waters a nautical apparition of the kind.

While yet in port and on dry land, in the bustle of preparation and the excitement of novelty, all was sunshine and promise. The Canadians, especially, were buoyant and boastful, and great braggarts as to the future; while all those who had been in the service of the Northwest Company, and engaged in the Indian trade, plumed themselves upon their hardihood and their capacity to endure privations. They were "North-westers"; men seasoned to hardships, who cared for neither wind nor weather. They could live hard, lie hard, sleep hard, eat dogs!—in a word, they were ready to do and suffer anything for the good of the enterprise.

Meanwhile it was a time of doubt and anxiety, when the relations between the United States and Great Britain were daily assuming a more precarious aspect and verging towards that war which shortly ensued. To guard against any interruption to the voyage by the armed brig, said to be off the harbour, Commodore Rodgers, commanding at New York, sent directions to Captain Hull, at that time cruising off the harbour in the frigate *Constitution*, to afford the *Tonquin* safe convoy off the coast.

Before the day of embarkation, Mr. Astor addressed

a letter of instruction to the four partners who were to sail in the ship. In this he gave them especial caution as to their conduct on arriving at their destined port; exhorting them to be careful to make a favourable impression upon the wild people among whom their lot and the fortunes of the enterprise would be cast. "If you find them kind," said he, "as I hope you will, be so to them. If otherwise, act with caution and forbearance, and convince them that you come as friends."

To Captain Thorn he wrote: "To prevent any misunderstanding will require your particular good management. I must recommend you to be particularly careful on the coast, and not to rely too much on the friendly disposition of the natives. All accidents which have as yet happened there have arisen from too much confidence in the Indians."



## CHAPTER III

### OUTWARD BOUND

ON the 8th of September, 1810, the *Tonquin* put to sea, where she was soon joined by the frigate *Constitution*. The wind was fresh and fair from the south-west, and the ship was soon out of sight of land and free from the apprehended danger of interruption. The frigate, therefore, gave her "Godspeed," and left her to her course.

The harmony so earnestly enjoined by Mr. Astor on this heterogeneous crew, and which had been so confidently promised in the buoyant moments of preparation, was doomed to meet with a check at the very outset. Captain Thorn, an honest but somewhat dictatorial commander, was disposed to be absolute lord and master on board of his ship. The partners, on the other hand, had been brought up in the service of the Northwest Company, and in a profound idea of the importance, dignity, and authority of partners, whom they had been accustomed to look up to as the great ones of the earth; and they were a little disposed, perhaps, to wear their suddenly acquired honours with some air of pretension.

On the very first night Captain Thorn began his man-of-war discipline by ordering the lights in the cabin to be extinguished at eight o'clock. The pride of the partners was immediately in arms. They were

on board of their own ship, and entitled to consult their ease and enjoyment. A violent altercation ensued, in the course of which Thorn threatened to put the partners in irons should they prove refractory; and it was some time before the irritated parties could be pacified by the more temperate bystanders.

Such was the Captain's outset with the partners. Nor did the clerks stand much higher in his good graces; indeed, he seems to have regarded all the landsmen on board his ship as a kind of live lumber, continually in the way. The poor *voyageurs*, too, those fresh-water sailors, so vainglorious on shore, and almost amphibious when on lakes and rivers, lost all heart and stomach the moment they were at sea. For days they suffered the doleful rigours and retchings of seasickness, lurking below in their berths in squalid state, or emerging now and then like spectres from the hatchways, in capotes and blankets, with dirty night-caps, grizzly beard, lantern visage, and unhappy eye, shivering about the deck, and ever and anon crawling to the sides of the vessel, and offering up their tributes to the windward, to the infinite annoyance of the captain.

Nor did his disgust and vexation cease when all hands had recovered from seasickness and become accustomed to the ship, for now broke out an alarming keenness of appetite that threatened havoc to the provisions. The partners were loud in their complaints of the ship's fare, though their table was served with fresh pork, hams, tongues, smoked beef, and puddings. "When thwarted in their cravings for delicacies," said he, "they would exclaim it was d——d hard they could not live as they pleased upon their own property, being on board of their own ship, freighted with their

own merchandise. And these," added he, "are the fine fellows who made such boast that they could 'eat dogs.' "

On the 4th of December they came in sight of the Falkland Islands. Having been for some time on an allowance of water, they resolved to anchor here and obtain a supply. Mr. M'Dougal and Mr. M'Kay took this occasion to go on shore, but with a request from the Captain that they would not detain the ship. They pitched a tent on shore, had a boat at their command, and passed their time merrily in rambling about the island, and coasting along the shores, shooting sea-lions, seals, foxes, geese, ducks, and penguins.

On the morning of the 11th, the repairs being all finished, and the water casks replenished, the signal was given to embark, and the ship began to weigh anchor. At this time several of the passengers were dispersed about the island, amusing themselves in various ways. The two sporting partners, however, had strolled away to the south of the island in pursuit of penguins. It would never do to put off without them, as there was but one boat to convey the whole.

While this delay took place on shore, the Captain was storming on board. His orders had been treated with contempt, and the ship was being wantonly detained; so he spread all sail and put to sea, swearing he would leave the laggards to shift for themselves. "Had the wind," wrote he to Mr. Astor, "(unfortunately) not hauled ahead soon after leaving the harbour's mouth, I should positively have left them; and, indeed, I cannot but think it an unfortunate circumstance for you that it so happened, for the first loss in this instance would, in my opinion, have proved the best, as they seem to have no idea of the value of

property, nor any apparent regard for your interest, although interwoven with their own."

Besides these feuds between the Captain and the partners, there were feuds between the partners themselves, occasioned, in some measure, by jealousy of rank. They began to draw plans for the fort and other buildings of the intended establishment. They agreed very well as to the outline and dimensions, which were on a sufficiently grand scale; but when they came to arrange the details, fierce disputes arose, and they would quarrel by the hour about the distribution of the doors and windows.

While all this petty anarchy was agitating the little world within the *Tonquin*, the good ship prosperously pursued her course, doubled Cape Horn on the 25th of December, careered across the bosom of the Pacific, until, on the 11th of February, the snowy peaks of Hawaii were seen brightening above the horizon.

On the morning after her arrival, the ship was surrounded by canoes and pirogues, filled with the islanders, bringing off supplies of fruits and vegetables, bananas, plantains, watermelons, yams, cabbages, and taro. The Captain was desirous, however, of purchasing a number of hogs; but there were none to be had. The trade in pork was a royal monopoly, and no subject of the great Tamaahmaah dared to meddle with it. Such provisions as they could furnish, however, were brought by the natives in abundance, and a lively intercourse was kept up during the day.

Captain Thorn, being disappointed in his hope of obtaining a supply of pork, or finding good water, was anxious to be off. As soon, then, as he could get his inquisitive partners once more on board, he weighed

anchor, and made sail for the island of Oahu, the royal residence of Tamaahmaah.

While at anchor there, much ceremonious visiting and long conferences took place between the potentate of the islands and the partners of the company. Tamaahmaah came on board of the ship in royal style, in his double pirogue. The American flag was displayed, four guns were fired, and the partners appeared in scarlet coats, and conducted their illustrious guests to the cabin, where they were regaled with wine. In this interview the partners endeavoured to impress the monarch with a sense of their importance, and of the importance of the association to which they belonged.

On the day subsequent to the monarch's visit, the partners landed and waited upon him in return. Knowing the effect of show and dress upon men in savage life, and wishing to make a favourable impression as the chiefs of the great American Fur Company, some of them appeared in Highland plaids and kilts, to the great admiration of the natives.

While visits of ceremony and grand diplomatic conferences were going on between the partners and the King, the Captain was pushing what he considered a far more important negotiation,—the purchase of a supply of hogs. He found that the King was a magnanimous monarch, but a shrewd pork merchant. Several interviews were requisite, and much bargaining, before he could be brought to part with a bristle of his bacon, and then he insisted upon being paid in hard Spanish dollars ; giving as a reason that he wanted money to purchase a frigate from his brother George, as he affectionately termed the King of England.

At length the royal bargain was concluded; the necessary supply of hogs was obtained, besides several

goats, two sheep, a quantity of poultry, and vegetables in abundance. The partners decided also to recruit their forces from the natives of this island, for they had never seen watermen equal to them. Twelve were therefore enlisted for the company, and as many more for the service of the ship.

And now, having embarked his live-stock, fruits, vegetables, and water, the Captain was ready to set sail. A favourable breeze sprang up, and in a little while the rich groves, green hills, and snowy peaks of those happy islands one after another sank from sight, or melted into the blue distance, and the *Tonquin* ploughed her course towards the sterner regions of the Pacific. Nothing occurred materially to disturb the residue of the voyage, excepting a violent storm; and on the twenty-second of March the *Tonquin* arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River.

## CHAPTER IV

### ASTORIA

THE mouth of the Columbia is upwards of four miles wide, with a peninsula and promontory on one side, and a long, low spit of land on the other; between which a sand-bar and chain of breakers almost block up the entrance. At the time of the arrival of the *Tonquin* a fresh wind from the north-west sent a rough, tumbling sea upon the coast, which broke upon the bar in furious surges, and extended a sheet of foam almost across the mouth of the river, making necessary some guide to their course.

Under these circumstances the first mate was sent with four assistants to sound the channel and direct the course of the ship. They quickly disappeared in the huge, rolling waves; evening set in; morning came; an anxious day and another anxious night passed, but no boat came. Again the *Tonquin* stood in to seek the channel, but was again deterred by the frightful aspect of the breakers from venturing within a league. Here she hove to; and the second mate was despatched with four hands, in the pinnace, to sound across the channel until he should find four fathoms' depth. The pinnace entered among the breakers, but was near being lost, and with difficulty got back to the ship.

The Captain now turned to Mr. Aiken, an able mariner, and ordered him, together with John Coles,

sailmaker, Stephen Weekes, armourer, and two Sandwich Islanders, to proceed ahead and take soundings, while the ship should follow under easy sail. In this way they proceeded until Aiken had ascertained the channel, when signal was given from the ship for him to return on board. He was then within pistol-shot, but so furious was the current and tumultuous the breakers that the boat became unmanageable, and was hurried away, the crew crying out piteously for assistance. Shortly after she broached broadside to the waves, and her case seemed desperate. The attention of those on board of the ship was now called to their own safety, for the vessel struck repeatedly, the waves broke over her, and there was danger of her foundering. The night coming on, they cast anchor; and at length the reflux of the tide, and the springing up of the wind, enabled them to quit their dangerous situation and take shelter in a small bay within Cape Disappointment, where they rode in safety during the residue of a stormy night, and enjoyed a brief interval of refreshing sleep.

With the light of day they looked out from the mast-head over a wild coast and wilder sea, but could discover no trace of the two boats and their crews that were missing. Parties now scoured the neighbourhood, the one headed by the Captain soon coming upon Weekes, the armourer. He and one of the Islanders were the only survivors of the crew of the jolly-boat, and no trace was ever discovered of the first mate and his party. Thus eight men were lost on the first approach to the coast.

Further search was made for the missing men, but with no better success, and they were at length given up as lost. In the meantime, the Captain and some of



the partners explored the river for some distance in a large boat, to select a suitable place for the trading post. Their old jealousies and differences continued; they never could coincide in their choice.

On the following day, therefore, without troubling himself to consult the partners, the Captain landed in Baker's Bay, on the north shore, and proceeded to erect a shed for the reception of the rigging, equipments, and stores of the schooner that was to be built for the use of the settlement.

Not having the Captain to contend with, the partners soon pitched upon a spot on the south shore which appeared to them favourable for the intended establishment. It was on a point of land called Point George, having a very good harbour, where vessels not exceeding two hundred tons burden might anchor within fifty yards of the shore.

After a day thus profitably spent, they recrossed the river, but landed several miles above the anchoring ground of the *Tonquin*, in the neighbourhood of Chinook, and visited the village of that tribe. Here they were received with great hospitality by the chief, Comcomly, a shrewd old savage, with but one eye, who certainly possessed great sway, not only over his own tribe but also over the neighbourhood.

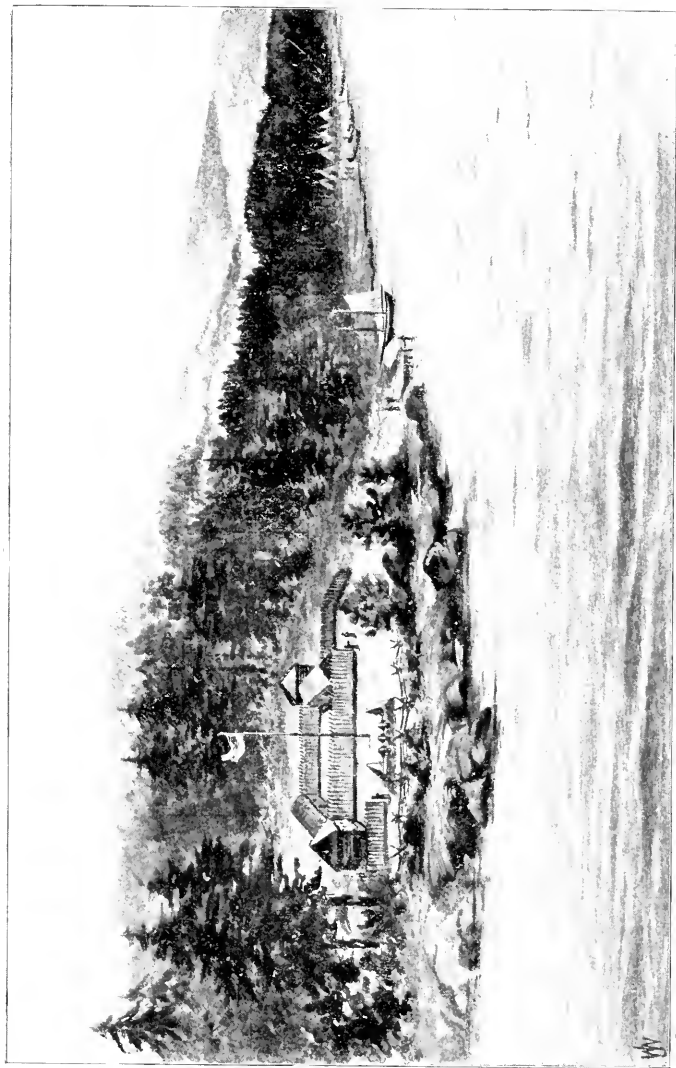
With this worthy tribe of Chinooks the two partners passed a part of the day very agreeably. They gave it to be understood that they were two chiefs of a great trading company, about to be established there; and the quick-sighted, though one-eyed chief, regaled them, therefore, with abundance of salmon and wapatoos. The next morning they prepared to return to the vessel over eleven miles of open bay; the wind was fresh, the waves ran high. Comcomly remon-

strated with them on the hazard to which they would be exposed. They were resolute, however, and launched their boat, while the wary chieftain followed at some short distance in his canoe. Scarce had they rowed a mile, when a wave broke over their boat and upset it. They were in imminent peril of drowning when Comcomly came bounding over the waves in his light canoe, and snatched them from a watery grave.

They were taken on shore and a fire made, after which Comcomly conducted them back to his village. Here everything was done that could be devised for their entertainment during the three days that they were detained by bad weather. When the storm had moderated and the sea become tranquil, the one-eyed chief of the Chinooks manned his state canoe, and conducted his guests in safety to the ship, where they were welcomed with joy, for apprehensions had been felt for their safety.

From the report made by the two exploring partners, it was determined that Point George should be the site of the trading house. Accordingly, on the 12th of April, the launch was freighted with all the things necessary for the purpose, and sixteen persons departed in her to begin the establishment. The *Tonquin* shortly afterwards made her way through the intricate channel, and came to anchor in the little bay. She was saluted with three volleys of musketry and with three cheers; and the encampment was named ASTORIA, in honor of the projector and supporter of the enterprise.

The part of the cargo destined for the use of Astoria was landed, and the ship left free to proceed on her voyage; for the *Tonquin* was to coast to the north, to trade for peltries at the different harbours, and to



ASTORIA, IN 1811  
Based on a print in Gray's "History of Oregon"



touch at Astoria on her return in the autumn. Mr. M'Kay went in her as supercargo, taking with him Mr. Lewis as ship's clerk. On the 1st of June the ship got under way, and dropped down to Baker's Bay, where she was detained for a few days by a head wind; but early in the morning of the fifth stood out to sea with a fine breeze and swelling canvas, and swept off gaily on her fatal voyage.

While the Astorians were busily occupied in completing their fort, a report was brought to them by an Indian that a party of thirty white men had appeared on the banks of the Columbia and were actually building houses at the second rapids. The Northwest Company had already established posts to the west of the Rocky Mountains, and it was now evident that they meant to seize upon the upper part of the river and forestall the American Fur Company in the surrounding trade. As a counter-check to this post, Mr. David Stuart set out with eight men and a small assortment of goods to establish himself on the Spokane River, in a neighbourhood abounding with beaver.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LOSS OF THE "TONQUIN"

WE have already stated that the *Tonquin* set sail from the mouth of the river on the 5th of June. The whole number of persons on board amounted to twenty-three. In one of the outer bays they picked up, from a fishing canoe, an Indian named Lamazee, who knew something of the language of the various tribes along the coast, and who agreed to accompany them as interpreter.

Steering to the north, Captain Thorn arrived in a few days at Vancouver Island, and anchored in the harbour of Neweetee, very much against the advice of his Indian interpreter, who warned him against the natives of this part of the coast. Mr. M'Kay, accompanied by a few of the men, went on shore to a large village to visit the chief of the surrounding territory, six of the natives remaining on board as hostages. He was received with great professions of friendship, entertained hospitably, and a couch of sea-otter skins was prepared for him in the dwelling of the chieftain, where he was prevailed upon to pass the night.

In the morning, before Mr. M'Kay had returned to the ship, great numbers of the natives came off in their canoes to trade, headed by two sons of Wicananish. As there was every appearance of a brisk trade, Captain Thorn did not wait for the return of Mr. M'Kay, but

spread his wares upon deck, making a tempting display of blankets, cloths, knives, beads, and fish-hooks, expecting a prompt and profitable sale. The Indians, however, were not so eager and simple as he had supposed, having learned the art of bargaining and the value of merchandise from the casual traders along the coast. When Captain Thorn made what he considered a liberal offer for an otter-skin, one wily old Indian treated it with scorn, and asked more than double. His comrades all took their cue from him, and not an otter-skin was to be had at a reasonable rate.

The old fellow, however, overshot his mark, and mistook the character of the man he was treating with. Thorn was a plain, straightforward sailor, who never had two minds nor two prices in his dealings. The cunning old Indian followed him to and fro, as he paced up and down the deck in sullen silence, holding out a sea-otter skin to him at every turn, and pestering him to trade. Finding other means unavailing, he suddenly changed his tone, and began to jeer and banter him upon the mean prices he offered. This was too much for the patience of the Captain, who, turning suddenly upon his persecutor, snatched the proffered otter-skin from his hands, rubbed it in his face, and dismissed him over the side of the ship with no very complimentary application to accelerate his exit. He then kicked the peltries to the right and left about the deck, and soon cleared the ship of all natives.

When Mr. M'Kay returned on board, the interpreter related what had passed, and begged him to prevail upon the Captain to make sail, as, from his knowledge of the temper and pride of the people of the place, he was sure they would resent the indignity offered to one of their chiefs. The Captain made light of his counsels,

and pointed to his cannon and firearms as sufficient safeguard against naked savages. The day passed away without any signs of hostility, and at night the Captain retired as usual to his cabin, taking no more than the usual precautions.

On the following morning, at daybreak, while the Captain and Mr. M'Kay were yet asleep, a canoe came alongside in which were twenty Indians. They were unarmed, their aspect and demeanour friendly, and they held up otter-skins, and made signs indicative of a wish to trade. The officer of the watch, perceiving those in the canoe to be without weapons, and having received no orders to the contrary, readily permitted them to mount the deck. Another canoe soon followed, the crew of which was likewise admitted; and another, until Indians were soon clambering into the vessel on all sides.

By the time Captain Thorn and Mr. M'Kay came on deck, it was thronged with Indians, and they noticed that many of the natives wore short mantles of skins, and doubtless were secretly armed. Mr. M'Kay urged the Captain to clear the ship and get under way. He again made light of the advice; but the swarm of canoes about the ship, and the numbers still putting off from shore, at length awakened his distrust, and he ordered some of the crew to weigh anchor, while some were sent aloft to make sail.

The Indians now offered to trade with the Captain on his own terms, buying knives chiefly, each one giving place to another as soon as he was supplied; until, by degrees, they were scattered about the whole deck, all with weapons.

The anchor was now nearly up, the sails were loose, and the Captain, in a loud and peremptory tone, ordered



the ship to be cleared. In an instant, a signal yell was given; knives and war-clubs were brandished in every direction, and the savages rushed upon their marked victims.

Mr. Lewis, the ship's clerk, was leaning, with folded arms, over a bale of blankets, engaged in bargaining, when he received a deadly stab in the back, and fell down the companionway. Mr. M'Kay, who was seated on the taffrail, sprang on his feet, but was instantly knocked down with a war-club and flung backwards into the sea, where he was despatched by the women in the canoes.

In the meantime Captain Thorn made desperate fight against fearful odds. Shewish, the young chief in command, singled him out as his peculiar prey, and rushed upon him at the first outbreak. The Captain had barely time to draw a clasp-knife, with one blow of which he laid the young savage dead at his feet. Several of the stoutest followers of Shewish now set upon him. He defended himself vigorously, dealing crippling blows to right and left, and strewing the quarter-deck with the slain and wounded. His object was to fight his way to the cabin, where there were firearms; but he was hemmed in with foes, covered with wounds, and faint with loss of blood. For an instant he leaned upon the tiller wheel, when a blow from behind felled him to the deck, where he was despatched with knives and thrown overboard.

While this was transacting upon the quarter-deck, a chance-medley fight was going on throughout the ship. The crew fought desperately with whatever weapon they could seize, but they were soon overpowered by numbers, and mercilessly butchered.

As to the seven who had been sent aloft to make sail,

being destitute of weapons, they let themselves down by the running rigging, in hopes of getting between decks. One fell in the attempt; another received a death-blow in the back; a third, Stephen Weekes, the armourer, was mortally wounded as he was getting down the hatchway.

The remaining four made good their retreat into the cabin, where they found Mr. Lewis, still alive, though mortally wounded. Barricading the cabin door, they broke holes through the companionway, and, with the muskets and ammunition which were at hand, opened a brisk fire that soon cleared the deck; then, sallying forth, they discharged some of the deck guns, which did great execution among the canoes, and drove all the savages to shore.

The remainder of that day and night passed away without any further attempt on the part of the natives. When the day dawned, the *Tonquin* still lay at anchor in the bay, her sails all loose and flapping in the wind, and no one apparently on board of her. After a time, some of the canoes ventured forth to reconnoitre, paddling about her cautiously at a distance. At length one man made his appearance on the deck, and was recognised by the interpreter, who had taken refuge with the Indians, as Mr. Lewis. He made friendly signs, and invited them on board. It was long before they ventured to comply. Those who mounted the deck met with no opposition; no one was to be seen on board; for Mr. Lewis, after inviting them, had disappeared. Other canoes now pressed forward to board the prize; the decks were soon crowded, and the sides covered with clambering savages, all intent on plunder. In the midst of their eagerness and exultation, the ship blew up with a tremendous explosion. Arms, legs, and

mutilated bodies were blown into the air, and dreadful havoc was made in the surrounding canoes. The interpreter was in the main-chains at the time of the explosion, and was thrown unhurt into the water, where he succeeded in getting into one of the canoes. The ship had disappeared, but the bay was covered with fragments of the wreck, with shattered canoes, and Indians swimming for their lives, or struggling in the agonies of death; while those who had escaped the danger remained aghast and stupefied, or made with frantic panic for the shore.

The inhabitants of Neweetee were overwhelmed with consternation at this astounding calamity, which had burst upon them in the very moment of triumph. The warriors sat mute and mournful, while the women filled the air with loud lamentations. Their weeping and wailing, however, was suddenly changed into yells of fury at the sight of four unfortunate white men, brought captive into the village. They had been driven on shore in one of the ship's boats, and had been taken at some distance along the coast.

They told the interpreter that after they had beaten off the enemy and cleared the ship, Lewis advised that they should slip the cable and endeavour to get to sea. They declined to take his advice, alleging that the wind set too strongly into the bay and would drive them on shore. They resolved, as soon as it was dark, to put off quietly in the ship's boat, which they would be able to do unperceived, and to coast along back to Astoria. They put their resolution into effect; but Lewis refused to accompany them, being disabled by his wound, hopeless of escape, and determined on a terrible revenge. He declared his intention to remain on board of the ship until daylight, to decoy as

many of the savages on board as possible, then to set fire to the magazine, in which was stored more than four tons of powder, and terminate his life by a signal act of vengeance. How well he succeeded has been shown. His companions bade him a melancholy adieu, and set off on their precarious expedition. They strove with might and main to get out of the bay, but found it impossible to weather a point of land, and were at length compelled to take shelter in a small cove, where they hoped to remain concealed until the wind should be more favourable. Exhausted by fatigue and watching, they fell into a sound sleep, and in that state were surprised by the savages. Better had it been for those unfortunate men had they remained with Lewis, and shared his heroic death: as it was, they perished in a more painful and protracted manner, being sacrificed by the natives to the spirits of their friends with all the lingering tortures of savage cruelty. Some time after their death, the interpreter, who had remained a kind of prisoner at large, effected his escape, and brought these tragic tidings to Astoria.

Dismay filled the hearts of the Astorians—a mere handful of men on a savage coast, amid tribes already believed to be in a conspiracy against them. In this juncture Mr. M'Dougal assembled several chieftains and said, "The white men among you are few in number, but they are mighty in medicine. See here! In this bottle I hold the smallpox safely corked up; I have but to draw the cork and let loose the pestilence, to sweep man, woman, and child from the face of the earth."

The chiefs, struck with horror and alarm, implored him not to uncork the bottle, since they and all their people were firm friends of the white men, and would

always remain so; but, should the smallpox be once let out, it would sweep off the good as well as the bad; and surely he would not be so unjust as to punish his friends for crimes committed by his enemies!

Mr. M'Dougal pretended to be convinced by their reasoning, and assured them that, so long as the white people should be unmolested, and the conduct of their Indian neighbours friendly and hospitable, the phial of wrath should remain sealed up; but, on the least hostility, the fateful cork should be drawn.

After this danger was averted, the year wore on its uneventful course. In October the southerly winds brought with them frequent rain. The Indians began to retire to their winter quarters farther inland, and, by their departure, compelled the colonists to forage more widely. Still the little band of adventurers kept up their spirits, and looked forward to the time when they should be reinforced by the party under Mr. Hunt, which was to come to them across the Rocky Mountains. The rain, which had poured down almost incessantly since the 1st of October, cleared up toward the evening of the 31st of December, and the morning of the 1st of January, 1812, ushered in a day of sunshine.

On the present occasion, the partners endeavoured to celebrate the new year with some effect. At sunrise the drums beat to arms and the colours were hoisted with three rounds of small arms and three discharges of cannon. The day was devoted to games of agility and strength, and other amusements; and grog was temperately distributed, together with bread, butter, and cheese. The best dinner their circumstances could afford was served up at midday. At sunset the colours were lowered, with another discharge of artillery. The

night was spent in dancing; and, though there was a lack of female partners to excite their gallantry, the *voyageurs* kept up the ball with true French spirit, until three o'clock in the morning. So passed the new year festival of 1812 at the infant colony of Astoria.

## CHAPTER VI

### UP THE MISSOURI

THE conduct of the overland expedition had been assigned to Mr. W. P. Hunt, who was ultimately to be at the head of the establishment at the mouth of the Columbia. Another of the partners, Mr. Donald M'Kenzie, was associated with Mr. Hunt in the expedition, and excelled in those points in which the other was deficient, for he had been ten years in the interior, in the service of the Northwest Company.

Mr. Hunt and his companion gathered the nucleus of their party from the *voyageurs* that frequented Montreal; and, by the end of July, they set out for Mackinac, and thence made their way to St. Louis, landing there on the 3d of September, 1810. Mr. Hunt's arrival there, and the appearance of a new fur company, with ample funds at its command, produced a strong sensation among the Indian traders of the place, and awakened the keen jealousy of the Missouri Company. In consequence it took him some weeks to complete his preparations—a delay which, added to those at Montreal and Mackinac, threw him much behind his calculations, and made it impossible for him to complete his voyage up the Missouri in that year.

To avoid the expense of wintering in St. Louis with his large party, Mr. Hunt took his departure from St. Louis on the 21st of October, his party being distributed

in three boats—two of them barges and the third a keel boat. By much persevering labour the party made its way about 450 miles up the Missouri, and on the 16th of November went into winter quarters at the mouth of the Nadowa River (St. Joseph, Mo.). The halt was made none too soon, for the river closed with ice two days afterwards. The party was now in a country abounding with deer and wild turkey, so that there was no stint of provisions during the months of delay and confinement.

Mr. Hunt availed himself of this interval to return to St. Louis, for he wished to procure an interpreter acquainted with the language of the Sioux, as he apprehended difficulties in passing through the country of that nation. He felt the necessity, also, of having a greater number of hunters, not merely to keep up a supply of provisions throughout their long and arduous expedition, but also as a protection and defence in case of Indian hostilities.

At the time of Mr. Hunt's arrival at St. Louis (January 20, 1811) Mr. Manuel Lisa (a partner of the Missouri Company) was fitting out an expedition to go in quest of Mr. Andrew Henry, a partner of that company, who had been dislodged by the Blackfeet from the upper waters of the Missouri, and had disappeared. There being thus two expeditions on foot at the same moment, an unusual demand was occasioned for hunters and *voyageurs*, who accordingly stipulated for high terms.

The greatest difficulty, however, was to get the Sioux interpreter, for there was but one man in St. Louis fitted for the purpose. He was Pierre Dorion, the son of Dorion, the French interpreter, who accompanied Lewis and Clark in their famous exploring expedition



across the Rocky Mountains. Pierre had been employed by the Missouri Fur Company during the preceding year, and had proved himself faithful and serviceable. His love of liquor, however, had run him deeply in debt to the company in places where whiskey was ten dollars a quart. This item still remained unsettled and was a matter of furious dispute.

The moment it was discovered by Mr. Lisa that Pierre Dorion was in treaty with the new and rival association, he endeavoured, by threats as well as promises, to prevent his engaging in their service. His promises might, perhaps, have prevailed; but his threats, which related to the whiskey debt, only served to drive Pierre into the opposite ranks. So Pierre took service with Mr. Hunt, and left St. Louis with his fellow-recruits on March 12, 1811, for the quarters at Nadowa, taking with him his squaw and two children.

Among the various persons who were to proceed up the Missouri with Mr. Hunt were two scientific gentlemen: one, Mr. John Bradbury, who had been sent out by the Linnæan Society of Liverpool to make a collection of American plants; the other, a Mr. Nuttall, likewise an Englishman, who has since made himself known as the author of *Travels in Arkansas*, and a work on the *Genera of American Plants*. Mr. Hunt had offered them the protection and facilities of his party, in their scientific researches up the Missouri. They put their trunks on board of the boat, but remained at St. Louis until the next day, for the arrival of the post, intending to join the expedition at St. Charles, a short distance above the mouth of the Missouri.

The same evening, however, they learned that a writ

had been issued against Pierre Dorion for his whiskey debt by Mr. Lisa, as agent of the Missouri Company, and that it was the intention to entrap the mongrel linguist on his arrival at St. Charles. Upon hearing this, Mr. Bradbury and Mr. Nuttall set off a little after midnight, by land, got ahead of the boat as it was ascending the Missouri, and, before its arrival at St. Charles, gave Pierre Dorion warning of the legal trap prepared to ensnare him. The knowing Pierre immediately landed and took to the woods, followed by his squaw, laden with their papooses, and a large bundle containing their most precious effects, promising to rejoin the party some distance above St. Charles. There seemed little dependence to be placed upon the promises of a loose adventurer who had already received two-thirds of his year's pay; but it was hoped his pique against his old employers would render him faithful to his new ones.

The party reached St. Charles in the afternoon, but the harpies of the law looked in vain for their expected prey. The boats resumed their course on the following morning and had not proceeded far when Pierre Dorion made his appearance on the shore. He was gladly taken on board, but he came without his squaw. They had quarrelled in the night. Pierre Dorion passed a solitary day and anxious night, bitterly regretting his indiscretion in having exercised his conjugal authority so near home. Before daybreak, however, a well-known voice reached his ears from the opposite shore. It was his repentant spouse, who had been wandering the woods all night in quest of the party, and had at length descried it by its fires. A boat was despatched for her and the interesting family was once more united.

On the afternoon of the third day the boats touched

at Charette, where they met Daniel Boone, the renowned patriarch of Kentucky, who had kept in the advance of civilisation and on the borders of the wilderness, still leading a hunter's life, though now in his seventy-seventh year. He had but recently returned from a hunting and trapping expedition, and had brought nearly sixty beaver skins as trophies of his skill. The old man was still erect in form, strong in limb, and unflinching in spirit, and flourished several years after this meeting in a vigorous old age.

The next morning, early, as the party were yet encamped at the mouth of a small stream, they were visited by another of these heroes of the wilderness, one John Colter, who had accompanied Lewis and Clark in their memorable expedition. He had recently come from the head waters of the Missouri in a small canoe, a distance of three thousand miles. Yet, with all the perils and terrors of his adventure fresh in his recollection, he had a strong impulse to join the present band, and was restrained by nothing but the circumstance of his recent marriage. All the morning he kept with them; but, after a march of several miles, he took a reluctant leave of the travellers and turned his face homeward.

Nothing else of interest transpired on the journey up the river, and at length Mr. Hunt, with his reinforcements, reached the station near the Nadowa River, where the main body of the expedition had been quartered during the winter.

The party now consisted of nearly sixty persons: of whom five were partners, one, John Reed, was a clerk; forty were Canadian *voyageurs*, and there were several hunters. They embarked in four boats, one of which was of a large size, mounting a swivel and two

howitzers. All were furnished with masts and sails, to be used when the wind was sufficiently favourable and strong to overpower the current of the river.

When the severe rains subsided that had already delayed him so long, Mr. Hunt broke winter quarters and, on April 21st, resumed the voyage up the Missouri. On the 10th of May the party passed the village of the Omahas, of whose former chief, Blackbird, such savage and romantic stories were told. The staff still remained over his grave from which fluttered the banner of that chieftain and the scalps he had taken in battle; and the custom of placing food from time to time on the mound, for the use of the dead, was still observed by the Omahas.

As Mr. Hunt and his party were now approaching the country of the formidable Sioux, they confined themselves, in hunting, to the islands, which sometimes extend to considerable length. After a sumptuous hunter's repast on one of them, they were pulling along the river-bank when they descried a canoe containing two white men. They proved to be two trappers, Benjamin Jones and Alexander Carson, who had been hunting and trapping for two years past near the head of the Missouri.

The acquisition of two such hardy and experienced men was peculiarly desirable at the moment. They needed little persuasion, and readily turned their faces again towards the mountains and the Pacific. Four days later (May 26th) they picked up three other hunters, Edward Robinson, John Hoback, and Jacob Rezner, who had been in the service of the Missouri Company under Mr. Henry, and were returning to their homes in Kentucky. But the sight of a powerful party of traders, trappers, hunters, and *voyageurs*

proved irresistible. Their families and all the charms of green Kentucky, vanished and they enlisted in the enterprise on similar terms with some of the other hunters: the company to fit them out and keep them supplied with the requisite equipment and munitions, and they to yield one-half of the produce of their hunting and trapping.

As the boats made their way up the stream bordered by a land of danger, the *voyageurs* regarded with a distrustful eye the boundless waste extending on each side. The very name of Sioux became a watchword of terror. Not an animal could appear on the hills but the boats resounded from stem to stern with, "*Voilà les Sioux ! voilà les Sioux !*"

On the morning of the 31st of May, as the travellers were breakfasting, the usual alarm was given, but with more reason, for two Sioux Indians actually did appear on the opposite bank, and harangued them in a loud voice. Then one of them went scouring across the heights while Mr. Hunt held some conference with the other, ascertaining from him that they were scouts of a large war party which had been waiting eleven days to oppose Mr. Hunt's progress up the river.

The party braced its spirits for the encounter and pulled resolutely up the stream. An island intervened for some time between them and the opposite bank; but, on clearing the upper end of it, they came in full view of the other shore. Thither the savages were rushing in great numbers, all armed, painted, and decorated for battle. To attempt to elude them was out of the question, so the fighting alternative was instantly adopted: the arms were examined, the howitzers loaded with bullets, and the whole party pulled across the river. "*Parbleu !* this is a sad scrape we are in,

brother!" one *voyageur* would mutter ruefully to the next oarsman. "Aye, aye! we are not going to a wedding, my friend!"

When the boats arrived within rifle-shot, the hunters seized their weapons, and prepared for action. As they rose to fire, a confusion took place among the savages. They displayed their buffalo robes, raised them with both hands, and then spread them before them on the ground as an invitation to a parley. Immediately about a dozen of the principal warriors, separating from the rest, descended to the edge of the river, lighted a fire, seated themselves in a semicircle round it, and, displaying the calumet, invited the party to land. Mr. Hunt and his companions drew near without hesitation, and took their seats on the sand so as to complete the circle; while the band of warriors who lined the banks above stood looking down in silent groups.

The pipe of peace was now brought forward; the pipe-bearer stepped within the circle, held the pipe towards the sun, then towards the different points of the compass, after which he handed it to the principal chief. The latter smoked a few whiffs, then, holding the bowl of the pipe in his hand, offered the stem to Mr. Hunt, and to each one successively in the circle. Now that all was good faith and amity, Mr. Hunt informed the Sioux that the real object of the expedition was not to trade with any of the tribes up the river, but to cross the mountains to the great salt lake in the west, in search of some of their brothers, whom they had not seen for eleven months. He had heard of the intention of the Sioux to oppose his passage, and was prepared, as they might see, to effect it at all hazards; nevertheless, his feelings towards the Sioux were

friendly, in proof of which he had brought them a present of tobacco and corn.

The sight of these presents and the resolute conduct of the white men mollified the chieftain. In his reply, he stated that the object of their hostile assemblage had been merely to prevent supplies of arms and ammunition from going to the Aricaras, Mandans, and Minnetarees, with whom they were at war. Being now convinced that the party were carrying no supplies of the kind, but merely proceeding in quest of their brothers beyond the mountains, they would not impede them in their voyage. All then arose, shook hands, and parted. Mr. Hunt and his companions re-embarked, and the boats proceeded on their course unmolested.

On the second morning, at an early hour, they descried two Indians standing on a high bank of the river, waving and spreading their buffalo robes in signs of amity. The savages, however, showed evident symptoms of alarm when approached, spreading out their arms according to their mode of supplicating clemency; nor were they quite at ease until the pipe of peace had been smoked. Mr. Hunt, having been informed that the tribe to which these men belonged had killed three white men during the preceding summer, reproached them with the crime, and demanded their reasons for such savage hostility. "We kill white men," replied one of the chiefs, "because white men kill us. That very man," added he, pointing to Carson, one of the new recruits, "killed one of our brothers last summer. The three white men were slain to avenge his death."

Carson admitted that, being with a party of Aricaras on the banks of the Missouri, and seeing a war party

of Sioux on the opposite side, he had fired a random shot, without much expectation of effect, for the river was fully half a mile in breadth. Unluckily it brought down a Sioux warrior, for whose wanton destruction threefold vengeance had been taken.

The two chiefs, having smoked their pipe of peace and received a few presents, departed well satisfied. In a little while two others appeared on horseback, and rode up abreast of the boats. They had seen the presents given to their comrades, and came after the boats to ask for more. Being somewhat peremptory and insolent in their demands, Mr. Hunt gave them a flat refusal, and threatened, if they or any of their tribe followed him with similar demands, to treat them as enemies. They turned and rode off in a furious passion. As he was ignorant what force these chiefs might have behind the hills, and as it was very possible they might take advantage of some pass of the river to attack the boats, Mr. Hunt called all stragglers on board, and arranged that he should ascend one side of the river, and the three smaller boats the other. By this arrangement each party would command a view of the opposite heights above the heads and out of sight of their companions, and could give the alarm should they perceive any Indians lurking there.

About four o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Hunt came to where the river was divided by a long sand-bar. He kept up the channel on his side of the bar for some distance, until the water proved too shallow for his boat. It was necessary, therefore, to return down the channel, and pull round the lower end of the sand-bar into the main stream. Just as he had given orders to this effect, two signal guns were fired from the boats on the opposite side of the river. At the same mo-



ment, a file of savage warriors was poured down from the overhanging bank, and gathered on the shore at the lower end of the bar. Here then was a fearful predicament. Mr. Hunt and his crew seemed caught in a trap. The Indians, to the number of about a hundred, had already taken possession of a point near which the boat would have to pass, and others kept pouring down the bank.

The hazardous situation of Mr. Hunt was perceived by those in the other boats, and they hastened to his assistance. Their anxiety increased, as they saw his party descending the channel and dauntlessly approaching the point of danger; but it suddenly changed into surprise on beholding the boat pass close by the savage horde unmolested, and steer out safely into the broad river.

The next moment the whole band of warriors was in motion. They ran along the bank until they were opposite the boats, then, throwing by their weapons and buffalo robes, plunged into the river, waded and swam off to the boats, and surrounded them in crowds, seeking to shake hands with every person on board; for the Indians had long since found this to be the white man's token of amity, and they carried it to an extreme.

All uneasiness was now at an end. The Indians proved to be a war party of Aricaras, Mandans, and Minnetarees, consisting of three hundred warriors, and bound on a foray against the Sioux. Their war plans were abandoned for the present, and they determined to return to the Aricara town, where they hoped to obtain from the white men arms and ammunition that would enable them to take the field with advantage over their enemies.

On the following morning Mr. Hunt had not pro-

ceeded far before the chief came galloping along the shore and made signs for a parley. He said his people could not go home satisfied unless they had something to take with them to prove that they had met with the white men. Mr. Hunt understood the drift of the speech, and made the chief a present of a cask of powder, a bag of balls, and three dozen knives, with which he was highly pleased. While the chief was receiving these presents an Indian came running along the shore, and announced that a boat, filled with white men, was coming up the river. Mr. Hunt correctly concluded it to be the boat of Mr. Manuel Lisa, who had been endeavouring to overtake him; and he was vexed to find that alert and adventurous trader upon his heels, whom he hoped to have out-manœuvered and left far behind.

Mr. Hunt perceived that it was useless to attempt any longer to evade his rival; after proceeding a few miles farther, therefore, he came to a halt and waited for the barge of Lisa to make its appearance. It came sweeping gently up the river, manned by its twenty stout oarsmen, and armed with a swivel mounted at the bow.

The meeting between the two leaders could not be very cordial. In truth, a general distrust prevailed throughout the party concerning Lisa and his intentions. There being now nothing more to be apprehended from the Sioux, they suspected that Lisa would take advantage of his twenty-oared barge to leave them and get first among the Aricaras. As he had traded with those people and possessed great influence over them, it was feared he might make use of it to impede the business of Mr. Hunt and his party.

Dorion, since the arrival of Lisa, had kept aloof and

regarded him with a sullen and dogged aspect. On the third day after their meeting, the two parties were brought to a halt by a heavy rain, and remained encamped about a hundred yards apart. In the course of the day Lisa undertook to tamper with the faith of Pierre Dorion, and, inviting him on board of his boat, regaled him with his favourite whiskey. When he thought him sufficiently mellowed, he proposed to him to quit the service of his new employers and return to his old allegiance. Finding him not to be moved by soft words, he called to mind his old debt to the company, and threatened to carry him off by force, in payment of it. The mention of this debt always stirred up the gall of Pierre Dorion, and he left the boat in high dudgeon.

Dorion's first step was to visit the tent of Mr. Hunt and reveal the attempt that had been made to shake his faith. While he was yet talking, Lisa entered the tent, under the pretext of coming to borrow a towing line. High words instantly ensued between him and Dorion, which ended by the half-breed's dealing him a blow. Lisa immediately rushed to his boat for a weapon, while Dorion snatched up a pair of pistols belonging to Mr. Hunt, and placed himself in battle array. A scene of uproar and hubbub ensued that defies description. Mr. Hunt acted as moderator, endeavouring to prevent a general melee; but in the midst of the brawl an expression was made use of by Lisa derogatory to his honour. In an instant his tranquil spirit was in a flame, and he became as eager for the fight as any one on the ground. By the earnest efforts of men on both sides the quarrel was brought to a close without bloodshed; but the two leaders separated in anger, and all personal intercourse ceased.

On the 11th of June, Mr. Hunt and his companions encamped about six miles below the Aricara village, and Mr. Lisa did the same, as usual at no great distance from them; but he maintained the same sullen reserve that had come to mark their relations. All hands embarked early next morning and set forward for the Indian village, which they reached about ten o'clock, but landed on the opposite side of the river, where they spread out their baggage to dry, the recent rains having been very heavy.

Neither of the leaders had spoken to the other since their quarrel, and now came the delicate point—how they should make their visit to the village. At length it was arranged that the two parties should cross the river at the same time. Accordingly, about two o'clock, the large boat of Mr. Hunt was manned, and he stepped on board. Lisa at the same time embarked in his barge, the two deputations amounting to fourteen persons. They landed amidst a rabble crowd, and were received on the bank by the head chief, who conducted them into the village with grave courtesy; driving to the right and left the swarms of old squaws, imp-like boys, and vagabond dogs with which the place abounded. They wound their way between the cabins, which looked like dirt-heaps huddled together without any plan, and surrounded by old palisades; all filthy in the extreme, and redolent of villainous smells. Arrived at the council lodge, they faced a grave gathering of twenty warriors.

After the solemn ceremony of the pipe, and when the chief had delivered his address of welcome, Lisa rose to reply, and the eyes of Hunt and his companions were eagerly turned upon him. He began by the usual expressions of friendship, and then proceeded to explain

the object of his own party. Those persons, however, said he, pointing to Mr. Hunt and his companions, are of a different party, and are quite distinct in their views; but, added he, though we are separate parties, we make but one common cause when the safety of either is concerned. Any injury or insult offered to them I shall consider as done to myself, and will resent it accordingly. I trust, therefore, that you will treat them with the same friendship that you have always manifested for me, doing everything in your power to serve them and to help them on their way. The speech of Lisa, delivered with an air of frankness and sincerity, agreeably surprised the rival party.

Mr. Hunt then spoke, declaring the object of his journey to the great Salt Lake beyond the mountains, and that he should want horses for the purpose, for which he was ready to trade, having brought with him plenty of goods. Both he and Lisa concluded their speeches by making presents of tobacco. The chief-tain in reply promised his friendship and aid to the newcomers, and welcomed them to his village. He added that they could readily supply Mr. Hunt with all the horses he might want, since, if they had not enough in the village, they could easily steal more.

The council over, the village soon presented the appearance of a busy fair; and as horses were in demand the adjacent plain was like the vicinity of a Tartar encampment; horses were put through all their paces, and horsemen were careering about with that dexterity and grace for which the Aricaras were noted. As soon as a horse was purchased, his tail was cropped, a sure mode of distinguishing him from the horses of the tribe; for the Indians disdained to practise this absurd, barbarous, and indecent mutilation, invented by some

mean and vulgar mind, insensible to the merit and perfections of the animal. On the contrary, the Indian horses were suffered to remain in every respect the superb and beautiful animals which nature formed them.

Suddenly the cry was up that the Sioux were coming. In an instant the village was in an uproar. Men, women, and children were all brawling and shouting; dogs barking, yelping, and howling. Some of the warriors ran to gather the horses from the prairie, some for their weapons. As fast as they could arm and equip, they sallied forth; some on horseback, some on foot. The women and children gathered on the tops of the lodges and heightened the confusion of the scene by their cries. Old men who could no longer bear arms harangued the warriors as they passed, exhorting them to valorous deeds. Some of the veterans took arms themselves, and sallied forth with tottering steps. In this way, the savage chivalry of the village to the number of five hundred poured forth, helter-skelter, riding and running, with hideous yells and war-whoops; but after a while it rolled back with far less uproar, for the enemy had retreated on being discovered.

One morning, just before daybreak, a great noise was heard in the village, and soon, on the dim hills, three hundred braves were discerned, returning from a foray. They had met the war party of Sioux who had been so long hovering about the neighbourhood, had fought them the day before, killed several, and defeated the rest with the loss of but two or three of their own men and about a dozen wounded; and they were now halting at a distance until their comrades in the village should come forth to meet them, and swell the parade of their triumphal entry. All the finery and equipments of the warriors were sent forth to them, that

they might appear to the greatest advantage. Those, too, who had remained at home, tasked their ward-robcs and toilets to do honour to the procession.

When, at length, the preparations were completed, the party drew near the village. Parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters met with the most rapturous expressions of joy; while wailings and lamentations were heard from the relatives of the killed and wounded.

Between two of the principal chiefs rode a young warrior who had distinguished himself in the battle. He was severely wounded, so as with difficulty to keep on his horse; but he preserved a serene and steadfast countenance, as if perfectly unharmed. His mother had heard of his condition. She broke through the throng, and rushing up, threw her arms around him and wept aloud. He kept up the spirit and demeanour of a warrior to the last, but expired shortly after he had reached his home.

The village was now a scene of the utmost festivity and triumph. The banners, and trophies, and scalps, and painted shields were elevated on poles near the lodges. There were war-feasts, and scalp-dances, with warlike songs and savage music; all the inhabitants were arrayed in their festal dresses; while the old heralds went round from lodge to lodge, promulgating with loud voices the events of the battle and the exploits of the various warriors.

But sounds of another kind were heard on the surrounding hills; piteous wailings of the women, who had retired thither to mourn in darkness and solitude for those who had fallen in battle. There the poor mother of the youthful warrior who had returned home in triumph but to die gave full vent to the anguish of

a mother's heart. "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."



## CHAPTER VII

### THE TETONS

ON the 18th of July, Mr. Hunt set out from the Aricara village by land, having disposed of his boats and superfluous goods to Mr. Lisa, who was to wait here for Mr. Henry, a partner in the Missouri Fur Company. With all his exertions, Mr. Hunt had been unable to obtain a sufficient number of horses for the accommodation of all his people. His cavalcade consisted of eighty-two horses, most of them heavily laden with Indian goods, beaver traps, ammunition, Indian corn, corn-meal, and other necessities. Each of the partners was mounted, and a horse was allotted to the interpreter, Pierre Dorion, for the transportation of his luggage and his two children. His squaw, for the most part of the time, trudged on foot, like the residue of the party; nor did any of the men show more patience and fortitude than this resolute woman in enduring fatigue and hardship.

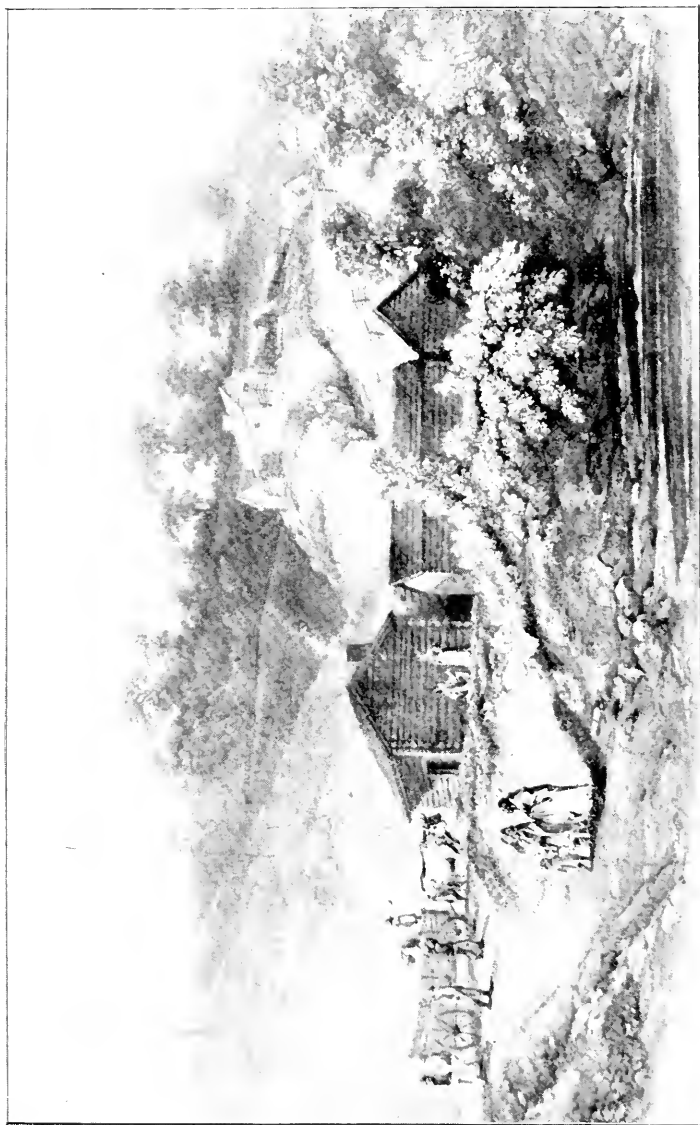
About a week after the start by land, as some of the hunters were in pursuit of game, they came upon an Indian camp on the open prairie. Reconnoitering it, they found that it belonged to a band of Cheyenne Indians who received the hunters in the most friendly manner; invited them to their lodges, which were more cleanly than Indian lodges are prone to be, and set food before them with true uncivilised hospitality.

Several of them accompanied the hunters back to the camp, when a trade was immediately opened. The Cheyennes were astonished and delighted to find a convoy of goods and trinkets thus brought into the very heart of the prairie; while Mr. Hunt and his companions were overjoyed to have an opportunity of obtaining a further supply of horses from these equestrian savages.

On the 6th of August the travellers bade farewell to the friendly band of Cheyennes, and resumed their journey. As they had obtained thirty-six additional horses by their recent traffic, Mr. Hunt made a new arrangement, allotting a horse to each of the six prime hunters, and distributing the rest among the *voyageurs*, a horse for every two, so that they could ride and walk alternately.

They were now out of the tract of country infested by the Sioux, and had advanced such a distance into the interior that Mr. Hunt no longer feared the desertion of any of his men. He was privately informed, however, that Edward Rose, the interpreter, was tampering with the fidelity of certain of the men. His plan was to induce several of the men to join with him, when in the neighbourhood of the Crows, whose country they were approaching, in carrying off a number of the horses with their packages of goods, and deserting to those savages. He assured them of good treatment among the Crows, the principal chiefs and warriors of whom he knew; they would soon become great men among them, and have the daughters of the chiefs for wives; and the horses and goods they carried off would make them rich for life.

Mr. Hunt resolved to frustrate the knave by making it sufficiently advantageous for him to remain



AN INDIAN AGENCY ON THE MISSOURI RIVER  
From an old engraving



honest. He took occasion, accordingly, in the course of conversation, to inform Rose that, having engaged him chiefly as a guide and interpreter through the country of the Crows, the company would not stand in need of his services beyond. Knowing, therefore, his connection by marriage with that tribe, and his predilection for a residence among them, they would put no restraint upon his will, but, whenever they met with a party of that people, would leave him at liberty to remain among his adopted brethren. Furthermore, that in thus parting with him, they would pay him half a year's wages in consideration of his past services, and would give him a horse, three beaver traps, and sundry other articles calculated to set him up in the world. This liberality was so unexpected that Rose's whole manner changed; his brow cleared up; he appeared more cheerful; he left off his sullen, skulking habits, and made no further attempt to tamper with the faith of his comrades.

The travellers, after much toil, had now arrived in the vicinity of the mountain regions infested by the Crow Indians. In fact, the following day had scarce dawned when a troop of these wild mountain scamperers came galloping with whoops and yells into the camp, bringing an invitation from their chief for the white men to visit him. The tents were accordingly struck, the horses laden, and the party were soon on the march, a ride of sixteen miles bringing them, in the afternoon, in sight of the Crow camp.

The following day was passed in trading with the Crows for buffalo robes and skins, and in bartering galled and jaded horses for others that were in good condition. Some of the men, also, purchased horses on their own account, so that the number now amounted

to one hundred and twenty-one, most of them sound and active, and fit for mountain service. Their wants being supplied, they ceased all further traffic, much to the dissatisfaction of the Crows, who became extremely urgent to continue the trade, and, finding their importunities of no avail, assumed an insolent and menacing tone.

No outbreak occurred, however, for the Crows were daunted by the resolute demeanour of the white men, and the armed preparation they maintained; and Rose, if he still harboured his knavish design, must have seen that it was suspected. Next morning Mr. Hunt, taking a ceremonious leave of the Crow chieftain and his vagabond warriors, consigned to their friendship their worthy confederate Rose; who, having figured among the water pirates of the Mississippi, was well fitted to rise to distinction among the land pirates of the Rockies. He was well received among the tribe, and he appeared to be more at his ease among savages than among white men.

Right glad to be delivered from this treacherous companion, Mr. Hunt pursued his course along the skirts of a mountain, in a southern direction, seeking for some practicable defile by which he might pass through it. But after two days of fruitless scrambling, he gave up the attempt to penetrate in the direction which he had taken. To his surprise Rose suddenly appeared in camp and announced himself a messenger of goodwill from the chief, who, finding they had taken the wrong road, had sent him to guide them to a nearer and better one across the mountain.

They had not gone far with this questionable guide before they fell in with the whole party of Crows, who, they now found, were going the same road with them-

selves. The two cavalcades pushed on together, presenting a wild and picturesque spectacle, as, equipped with various weapons and in various garbs, with trains of pack-horses, they wound in long lines through the rugged defiles, and up and down the crags and steepes of the mountains.

As the travelling was painful to the burdened horses, Mr. Hunt's party was gradually left behind by the Crows, who had taken the lead. Certain it is that Mr. Hunt felt a sensation of relief as he saw the whole crew, the renegade Rose and all, disappear among the windings of the mountain, and heard the last yelp of the savages die away in the distance. When the Indians were fairly out of sight and out of hearing, he encamped long enough for them to get well in advance.

On the 9th of September, the travellers came to a rapid and beautifully clear stream about a hundred yards wide. It is the north fork of the Big Horn River, but bears its peculiar name of the Wind River from being subject in the winter season to a continued blast which sweeps its banks and prevents the snow from lying on them.

For five succeeding days, Mr. Hunt and his party continued up the course of the Wind River, to the distance of about eighty miles, crossing and recrossing it, according to its windings and the nature of its banks. At length meeting with a beaten Indian road which led in the proper direction, they struck into it, turning their backs upon Wind River.

In the course of the day, they came to a height that commanded an almost boundless prospect. Here one of the guides paused, and, after considering the vast landscape attentively, pointed to three mountain peaks

glistening with snow, which rose, he said, above a fork of Columbia River. They were hailed by the travellers with that joy with which a beacon on a sea-shore is hailed by mariners after a long and dangerous voyage. It is true there was many a weary league to be traversed before they should reach these landmarks; and even after reaching them, there would yet remain hundreds of miles of their journey to be accomplished; yet, all these matters were forgotten in the joy at seeing the first landmarks of the Columbia, that river which formed the bourne of the expedition. These remarkable peaks were known as the Tetons; as guiding points for many days to Mr. Hunt, he gave them the name of the Pilot Knobs.

That day's march of forty miles carried them across the range of the Wind River Mountains into the valley of the Green River, a region destined to become famous in the history of the traders and trappers of the Rocky Mountains. Five days were passed in the fresh meadows watered by this bright little mountain stream. The hunters made great havoc among the buffaloes, and brought in quantities of meat; the *voyageurs* busied themselves about the fires, roasting and stewing for present purposes, or drying provisions for the journey; the pack-horses, eased of their burdens, rolled on the grass, or grazed at large about the ample pastures; those of the party who had no call upon their services indulged in the luxury of perfect relaxation, and the camp presented a picture of rude feasting and revelry, of mingled bustle and repose, characteristic of a halt in a fine hunting country.

Being now well supplied with provisions, Mr. Hunt broke up his encampment on the 24th of September, and continued on to the west. A march of fifteen



miles, over a mountain ridge, brought them to a stream about fifty feet in width, which Hoback, one of their guides, for whom the stream has since been named, recognised as one of the head waters of the Columbia, their destination. They kept along it for two days, during which, from the contribution of many rills and brooks, it gradually swelled into a small river. Finally it emptied into a river of greater magnitude and swifter current, and their united waters swept off through the valley in one impetuous stream, which, from its rapidity and turbulence, had received the name of Mad River—since called the Snake, from the Indian tribe dwelling on its banks. An important point in their arduous journey had been attained, a few miles from their camp rose the three vast snowy peaks called the Tetons, or the Pilot Knobs, the great landmarks of the Columbia, by which they had shaped their way through this mountain wilderness. By their feet flowed a stream down which they might be able to steer their course to the Columbia.

As the neighbourhood was a good “trapping ground” it was proper to begin to cast loose here those pairs of hardy trappers that are detached from trading parties in the very heart of the wilderness; for trappers generally go in pairs, that they may assist, protect, and comfort each other in their lonely and perilous occupations. Thus Carson and St. Michel formed one couple, and Detayé and Delaunay another. They were fitted out with traps, arms, ammunition, horses, and every other requisite, and were to trap upon the upper part of Mad River, and upon the neighbouring streams of the mountains. This would probably occupy them for some months; and, when they should have collected a sufficient quantity of peltries, they

were to pack them upon their horses and make the best of their way to the mouth of Columbia River, or to any intermediate post which might be established by the company. They took leave of their comrades and started off on their several courses with stout hearts and cheerful countenances.

Robinson, Hoback, and Rezner, the three hunters who had hitherto served as guides among the mountains, now advised Mr. Hunt to make for the post established during the preceding year by Mr. Henry, of the Missouri Fur Company, after he had been driven from the upper Missouri the preceding summer by the hostilities of the Blackfeet. They had been with Mr. Henry, and, as far as they could judge by the neighbouring landmarks, his post could not be very far off. So, crossing the Snake and the Teton pass, they arrived, on October 8th, at the post that had been abandoned by Mr. Henry in the spring, when he set out to rejoin Lisa at the Aricara village, where he arrived some time after Mr. Hunt's departure.

The weary travellers gladly took possession of the deserted log huts which had formed the post; and, there being plenty of suitable timber in the neighbourhood, Mr. Hunt immediately proceeded to construct canoes. As he would have to leave his horses and their accoutrements here, he determined to make this a trading post, where the trappers and hunters, to be distributed about the country, might repair; and where the traders might touch on their way through the mountains to and from the establishment at the mouth of the Columbia. He engaged two Snake Indians, who had come into camp, to remain in that neighbourhood and care for the horses until he could send for them. It was the one chance of regaining them, des-

perate as it seemed to trust to the honesty of two such vagabonds.

At this place, three other hunters separated from the party for the purpose of trapping beaver. They were the veteran Robinson, and his companions, Hoback and Rezner, who had been picked up by Mr. Hunt on their way back to Kentucky.

When they and another by the name of Cass were about to start, Mr. Miller, a partner whom Mr. Hunt had taken in at St. Louis, called together his associates and in disgust threw up his share in the company and declared his intention of joining the party of trappers. As he would not be reasoned with, he was fitted out with a generous equipment, and allowed to cast himself loose thus wantonly upon savage life.

## CHAPTER VIII

CALDRON LINN

BY the 18th of October, fifteen canoes were completed, and on the following day the party embarked with their effects; leaving their horses grazing about the banks, and trusting to the honesty of the two Snakes and some special turn of good luck for their future recovery.

The current bore them along at a rapid rate; the light spirits of the Canadian *voyageurs*, which had occasionally flagged upon land, rose to their accustomed buoyancy on finding themselves again upon the water. They wielded their paddles with their wonted dexterity, and for the first time made the mountains echo with their favourite boat songs.

In the course of the day the little squadron arrived at the confluence of Henry and Snake rivers, which, thus united, swelled into a beautiful stream, navigable for boats of any size. The weather was cold, and it snowed all day, and great flocks of ducks and geese sporting in the water or streaming through the air gave token that winter was at hand; yet the hearts of the travellers were light, and, as they glided down the little river, they flattered themselves with the hope of soon reaching the Columbia.

The three snowy summits of the Tetons were still seen towering in the distance. After pursuing a swift

but placid course for twenty miles, the current began to foam and brawl, and assume the wild and broken character common to the streams west of the Rocky Mountains. Two of the canoes filled among the breakers; the crews were saved, but much of the lading was lost or damaged, and one of the canoes drifted down the stream and was broken among the rocks.

They consumed a great part of the next day in passing the canoes down cautiously by a line from the impending banks; and after they had reëmbarked they were soon again impeded by rapids, when they had to unload their canoes and carry them and their cargoes for some distance by land. It is at these portages that the Canadian *voyageur* exhibits his most valuable qualities; carrying heavy burdens, and toiling to and fro, on land and in the water, over rocks and precipices, among brakes and brambles, not only without a murmur, but with the greatest cheerfulness and alacrity, joking and laughing and singing scraps of old French ditties.

They had now come near two hundred and eighty miles since leaving Fort Henry, yet without seeing a human being, or a human habitation. At length, on the 24th of October, they were gladdened by the sight of some tents, and hastened to land and visit them; but the savages in them fled in consternation, leaving behind great quantities of small fish, together with roots and grain, which they were drying for winter provisions.

The 28th of October was a day of disaster. The river again became rough and impetuous, and was chafed and broken by numerous rapids. These grew more and more dangerous, and the utmost skill was required to steer among them. The second canoe of the

squadron had an old, experienced Canadian for steersman, named Antoine Clappine, one of the most valuable of the *voyageurs*. The leading canoe had glided safely among the turbulent and roaring surges; but, in following it, the second canoe, striking a rock, was split and overturned. Of the five persons on board two were thrown amidst roaring breakers and a whirling current, but succeeded in reaching the shore. Clappine and the two others clung to the shattered bark, and drifted with it to a rock. The wreck struck the rock with one end, and swinging round, flung poor Clappine off into the raging stream, which swept him away, and he perished. His comrades succeeded in getting upon the rock whence they were afterwards rescued.

They had arrived at a terrific strait, that forbade all further progress in the canoes. The whole body of the river was compressed into a space of less than thirty feet in width, between two ledges of rocks, upwards of two hundred feet high, and formed a whirling and tumultuous vortex, so frightfully agitated as to receive the name of "The Caldron Linn." Beyond this fearful abyss, the river kept raging and roaring on, until lost to sight among impending precipices. Short reconnaissances were made from this point, and John Reed, the clerk, with a party of three was sent forward to make a more extended exploration of the river.

The situation of the travellers was now perilous in the extreme, especially as the repeated accidents to their canoes had reduced their stock of provisions to five days' allowance, and famine was added to their other sufferings. Accordingly, it was determined that several small detachments should start off in different

directions, headed by the several partners. Should any of them succeed in falling in with friendly Indians, within a reasonable distance, and obtaining a supply of provisions and horses, they were to return to the aid of the main body: otherwise they were to shift for themselves, and shape their course according to circumstances; keeping the mouth of the Columbia River as the ultimate point of their wayfaring. Accordingly, three several parties set off from the camp at Caldron Linn, in opposite directions. Mr. M'Lellan, with three men, kept down along the bank of the river. Mr. Crooks, with five others, turned their steps up it; retracing by land the weary course they had made by water, intending, should they not find relief nearer at hand, to keep on until they should reach Henry's Fort, where they hoped to find the horses they had left there, and to return with them to the main body.

The third party, composed of five men, was headed by Mr. M'Kenzie, who struck to the northward, across the desert plains, in hopes of coming upon the main stream of the Columbia.

With Mr. Hunt there were left thirty-one men, and the squaw and two children of Pierre Dorion. They began caching<sup>1</sup> their goods and baggage so as to be

<sup>1</sup>A cache is a secret hiding-place that is carefully prepared, preferably in the clay bank of some stream. Blankets are spread over the surrounding grass and then a circle two feet in diameter is nicely cut in the sod, which is carefully removed together with the loose soil immediately beneath it. The opening is dug perpendicularly to the depth of three feet, and is then gradually widened so as to form a conical chamber six or seven feet deep. The earth dug from this is heaped in blankets and thrown into the midst of the stream that it may be entirely carried off.

The cave thus formed is well lined with dry grass, bark,

ready to move forward afoot, if it should be necessary. While they were thus employed Mr. Crooks unexpectedly returned, being disheartened after three days by the difficulties that made it impossible to reach Henry's Fort and return during the course of the winter. Five days later two of Mr. Reed's men returned to report the river unnavigable. In consequence, it was decided not to attempt navigation, but to make the best of their way on foot. They divided the party into two bands; Mr. Hunt with eighteen men, beside Pierre Dorion and his family, set out down one bank, and Mr. Crooks with eighteen others down the other bank of the Snake River. It was the 9th of November when they said good-bye to Caldron Linn, giving it, in disgust at the disasters here met with, the name of "The Devil's Scuttle Hole."

After several days of difficult travelling, Mr. Hunt's party fell into a beaten track leading along the river; and they had not proceeded far before they met two Snake Indians from whom, and from fellow-tribesmen as scantily provided as themselves, they from time to time got some slight help. On the 6th of December they were brought to a standstill by the impassable Blue Mountains; and next day they were greeted across the foaming river by Mr. Crooks and his fol-

sticks, and poles. The property, having been well aired, is then laid in; dry grass, brush, and stones are thrown in and trampled down, until the neck of the cache is nearly level with the surrounding surface, and then the sod is replaced with the utmost exactness, and any bushes or stones that may have originally been about the spot are restored to their former places. The blankets are removed, all tracks obliterated, the grass gently raised by hand to its natural position, and the smallest chip or straw gleaned up and thrown into the stream.



lowers, who had been turned back by the same obstacles. Their first cry was for food, and the answer was such food as Mr. Hunt had. Their month's wanderings also had been one long struggle with hunger and want.

Altogether the situation was a critical one, and Mr. Hunt decided to return to the Indians, only to find that many of the Crooks party were too weak to move at more than a snail's pace. In fact Mr. Crooks soon became too ill to move at all, and he and Mr. Hunt were quickly deserted, so desperate had the men become.

Setting out with a companion or two in the hope of finding some aid Mr. Hunt had not proceeded far when he came in sight of a lodge of Shoshonies, with a number of horses grazing around it. They came upon the savages by surprise, who fled in terror. They eagerly seized five of their horses, killed one on the spot, and, hastily cooking and devouring a portion, they hurried the rest of the meat to Mr. Crooks and to his famished men across the river.

Mr. Hunt now sent forward all his men except four Canadians and John Day who were to remain with Mr. Crooks, and to follow slowly, when their strength permitted. He himself, a day later, came up with his main party, and, on the 24th of December, he turned his back on the disastrous banks of the Snake River, and struck westward across the mountains. On the 29th, he came upon an Indian camp in the valley of the Grande Ronde, where a hearty meal restored every one to good spirits.

After two days of welcome rest the travellers addressed themselves once more to their westward journey and in particular to the snow-clad hills that lay in their

path—the Blue Mountains, the last barrier between them and the Columbia. It was a week, however, before they descended into the balmy valley of the Umatilla River, and came upon a camp of prosperous Sciutoga Indians. Here they found articles of civilised manufacture, and learned that several white men had recently descended this river.

On the 20th of January, after a two-weeks rest among these friendly Indians, Mr. Hunt set out again, reaching the Columbia the next day, and crossing to the road which led along its north bank. Here and there he picked up information concerning the men who had preceded him down the river, and learned in one place that they had overturned one of their canoes, losing many articles. He also had vague news concerning the establishment at the mouth of the Columbia, and a fairly correct version of the loss of the *Tonquin*.

On the 31st of January, Mr. Hunt encamped at the village of the Wish-ram, situated at the head of “the Long Narrows” (The Dalles). He fortunately escaped serious trouble with its freebooting inhabitants, and left there in canoes on February 5th.

Except for a portage at the cascades the canoes met with no further obstruction, and, on the afternoon of the 15th of February, 1812, swept round an intervening cape, and came in sight of the settlement of Astoria, with its magazines, habitations, and picketed bulwarks, on a high point of land dominating a beautiful little bay, in which was a trim-built shallop riding quietly at anchor. A shout of joy burst from each canoe at the long-wished-for sight. They urged their canoes across the bay, and pulled with eagerness for shore, where all hands poured down from the settlement to receive and welcome them.

Among the first to greet them were some of their old comrades and fellow-sufferers, who, under the conduct of Reed, M'Lellan, and M'Kenzie, had parted from them at the Caldron Linn. These had reached Astoria nearly a month before, and, judging from their own narrow escape from starvation, had given up Mr. Hunt and his followers as lost. As to the Canadian *voyageurs*, their mutual felicitations were loud and vociferous, and it was almost laughable to behold these ancient "comrades" and *confrères* hugging and kissing each other.

When the first greetings were over, the different bands interchanged accounts of their several wanderings, after separating at Snake River. It will be recollected that a small exploring detachment had proceeded down the river, under the conduct of Mr. John Reed, a clerk of the company; that another had set off under M'Lellan, and a third in a different direction under M'Kenzie. After wandering for several days without meeting with Indians, or obtaining any supplies, they came together by chance among the Snake River mountains, some distance below that disastrous pass which had received the name of the Devil's Scuttle Hole.

When thus united, their party consisted of M'Kenzie, M'Lellan, Reed, and eight men, chiefly Canadians. Being without horses and provisions they all agreed that it would be useless to return to Mr. Hunt, and that their only course was to extricate themselves as soon as possible from this land of famine and make their way for the Columbia.

At length, after twenty-one days, they got through the mountains, and reaching the Lewis River, they fell in with a friendly tribe of Indians. From these they

procured two canoes, in which they dropped down the stream to its confluence with the Columbia, and then down that river to Astoria, where they arrived haggard and emaciated, and perfectly in rags.

Thus all the leading persons of Mr. Hunt's expedition were once more gathered together, excepting Mr. Crooks, of whose safety they entertained but little hope, considering the feeble condition in which they had been compelled to leave him in the heart of the wilderness.

A day was now given up to jubilee, to celebrate the arrival of Mr. Hunt and his companions, and the joyful meeting of the various scattered bands of adventurers at Astoria. The colours were hoisted; the guns, great and small, were fired; there was a feast of fish, of beaver, and venison, which relished well with men who had so long been glad to revel on horse flesh and dogs' meat; a genial allowance of grog was issued, and the festivities wound up, as usual, with a grand dance at night, by the Canadian *voyageurs*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The distance from St. Louis to Astoria, by the route travelled by Hunt, was estimated by him at thirty-five hundred miles.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE INDIANS OF WISH-RAM

AS the spring opened, the little settlement of Astoria was in agitation, and prepared to send forth various expeditions. As the route of the several parties would be the same for nearly four hundred miles up the Columbia, and within that distance would lie through the piratical pass of the rapids, and among the freebooting tribes of the river, it was thought advisable to start about the same time and to keep together. Accordingly, on the 22d of March, they all set off, to the number of seventeen men, in two canoes,—John Reed to carry important despatches overland to Mr. Astor in New York; two clerks with sufficient help to fetch the goods deposited by Mr. Hunt in the nine caches at Caldron Linn; and Robert Stuart with goods and reinforcements for his uncle's post at Okanagan.

At the Long Narrows (The Dalles), being too few in number to make the portage alone, the party hired the Indians to aid them. The first load was convoyed by five men well armed, and by Reed, that gallant Irishman, striding along at the head, with his tin case of despatches glittering on his back. In passing through a rocky defile, some of the thievish vagrants turned their horses up a narrow path and galloped off, carrying with them two bales of goods and a number of small articles. To follow was useless; indeed, it was

with much ado that the convoy got the rest of the cargoes into port, and later, being joined by the rest of the party, they remained under arms all night, hastily embarking at the first peep of dawn.

The worthies of Wish-ram were disposed to take further tolls of the travellers, and, if possible, to capture the shining tin case of despatches, which they supposed must be "a great medicine." Accordingly, when the party landed in order to pass the falls, four hundred of these river ruffians pressed forward with offers to carry the canoes and effects up the portage. These were accepted in regard to the canoes with great precautions, but when the Indians reached the head of the falls, they were with difficulty kept from destroying both the canoes. Mr. Stuart tried to steal a march on them by transporting the goods during the night; but at daybreak there were still two loads to be brought.

Although the Indians had given the alarm, Mr. Stuart despatched the men for one of the loads with a request to Mr. Reed to keep as many as he thought necessary to guard the other. Mr. Reed refused to keep any of the men, saying that M'Lellan and himself were sufficient. Scarcely had the men departed, when the first canoe-loads of savages reached the spot. With a war-whoop they leaped forward to secure the glittering tin box of John Reed, and to hoodwink M'Lellan with a buffalo robe. The latter escaped the accompanying dagger thrust and shot his assailant through the heart; but Reed, still fumbling with the leather cover to his rifle, was stretched senseless and stripped in a twinkling of his rifle and pistols, and the shining tin box was borne off in triumph. In fact, Reed himself was about to be tomahawked, when Mr. Stuart and eight men came charging with a cheer to the rescue,

shot the miscreant, and carried Reed's almost lifeless body to the upper end of the portage.

After some necessary calking the canoes were launched and the Indians returned to the scene of action, bore off the dead, and returned to their village. Here they killed two horses and drank the hot blood to give fierceness to their courage. They painted and arrayed themselves hideously for battle; performed the dead dance round the slain, and raised the war song of vengeance. Then mounting their horses, to the number of four hundred and fifty men, and brandishing their weapons, they set off along the northern bank of the river, got ahead of the canoes, and prepared for a terrible revenge. Fortunately they were perceived by Mr. Stuart and his companions.

Finding that the enemy had the advantage of position, the whites stopped short, lashed their canoes together, fastened them to a rock at a small distance from the shore, and there awaited the menaced attack. Soon the war-chief and three of his warriors drew near in a canoe and informed them that the relations of the slain cried out for vengeance. As he wished to spare unnecessary bloodshed, he proposed that Mr. Reed, who was little better than a dead man, might be given up to be sacrificed to the manes of the dead. The hatchet would then be buried, and all thenceforward would be friends. The answer, a refusal and a stern defiance, sent the chief back to his warriors among the rocks. Blood for blood is a principle in Indian equity and Indian honour; but though the inhabitants of Wish-ram were men of war, they were likewise men of traffic; and, after some diplomacy, they offered to compromise the matter for a blanket to cover the dead, and some tobacco to be smoked by the living. This being

granted, the heroes of Wish-ram crossed the river once more, returned to their villages to feast upon the horses whose blood they had so vaingloriously drunk, and the travellers pursued their voyage without further molestation.

The tin case, however, containing the important despatches for New York, was irretrievably lost; the very precaution taken by Reed to secure his missives had, by rendering them conspicuous, produced their robbery. The object of his overland journey, therefore, being defeated, he gave up the expedition, and went with the whole party to the establishment of Mr. David Stuart, on the Okanagan River. After remaining here two or three days, they all set out on their return to Astoria, accompanied by Mr. David Stuart.

On their way down, when below the forks of the Columbia, they were hailed one day from the shore in English. Looking around, they descried two wretched men, entirely naked, who proved to be Mr. Crooks and his faithful follower, John Day.

The reader will recollect that Mr. Crooks, with Day and four Canadians, had been so reduced by famine and fatigue, that Mr. Hunt was obliged to leave them, in the month of December, on the banks of the Snake River. Their situation was the more critical, as they were in the neighbourhood of a band of Shoshonies, whose horses had been forcibly seized by Mr. Hunt's party for provisions. Mr. Crooks remained here twenty days, detained by the extremely reduced state of John Day, who was utterly unable to travel, and whom he would not abandon, as Day had been in his employ on the Missouri, and had always proved himself most faithful. Fortunately the Shoshonies did not offer to molest them. They had never before seen white men,



and seemed to entertain some superstitions with regard to them, for though they would encamp near them in the daytime, they would move off with their tents in the night; and finally disappeared, without taking leave.

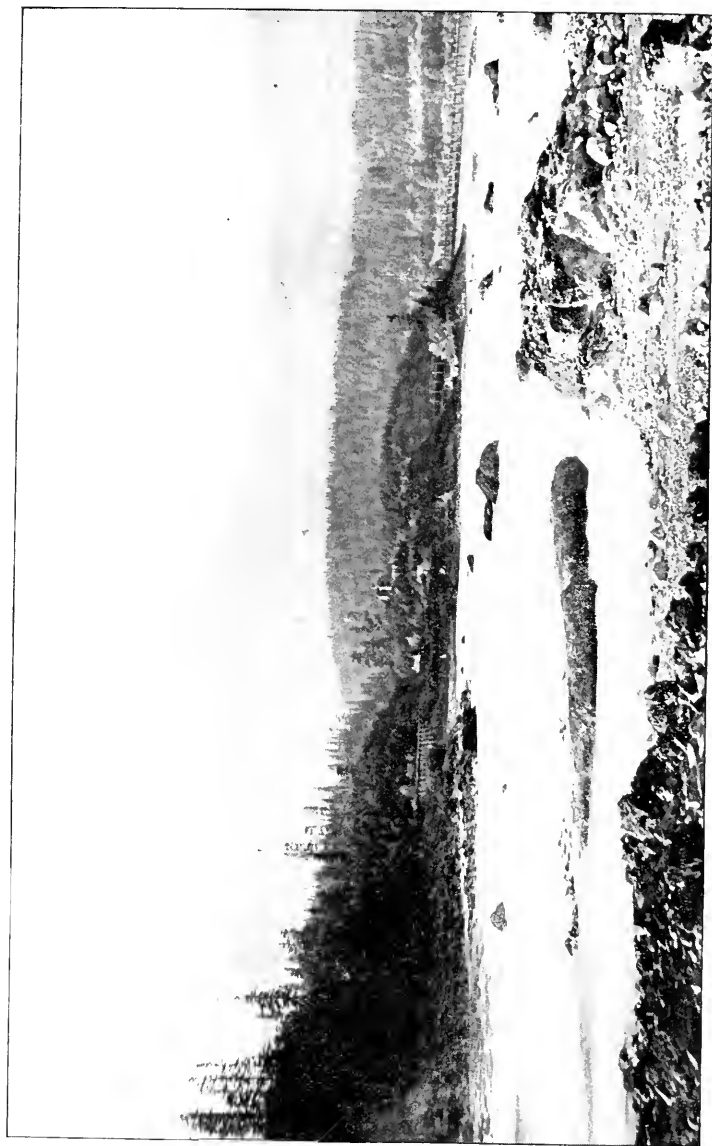
When Day was sufficiently recovered to travel, they kept feebly on, sustaining themselves as well as they could. At length, coming to a low prairie, they lost every appearance of the "trail," and wandered during the remainder of the winter in the mountains, subsisting sometimes on horse meat, sometimes on beavers and their skins, and a part of the time on roots. At length, finding the snow sufficiently diminished, they undertook to cross the last mountain ridge, and happily succeeded, afterwards falling in with the Walla-Wallas, a tribe inhabiting the banks of the river of the same name, and reputed as being frank, hospitable, and sincere. They proved worthy of the character, for they received the poor wanderers kindly, killed a horse for them to eat, and directed them on their way to the Columbia. They struck the river about the middle of April, and advanced down it until they met with some of the "chivalry" of Wish-ram, who received them in a friendly way, and set food before them; but, while they were satisfying their hunger, perfidiously seized their rifles, stripped them naked, and drove them off, refusing the entreaties of Mr. Crooks for a flint and steel of which they had robbed him; and threatening his life if he did not instantly depart.

In this forlorn plight they now sought to find their way back to the hospitable Walla-Wallas, and had advanced eighty miles along the river, when fortunately, on the very morning that they were going to leave the Columbia and strike inland, the canoes of Mr. Stuart hove in sight.

It is needless to describe the joy of these poor men at once more finding themselves among countrymen and friends, or of the honest and hearty welcome with which they were received by their fellow adventurers. The whole party now continued down the river, passed all the dangerous places without interruption, and arrived safely at Astoria on the 11th of May, the day after the annual ship arrived there from New York.

Although Mr. Astor had as yet heard nothing of the success of the previous expeditions, he proceeded upon the presumption that everything had been effected according to his instructions. He accordingly fitted out a fine ship of four hundred and ninety tons, called the *Beaver*, and freighted her with a valuable cargo destined for the factory at the mouth of the Columbia, the trade along the coast, and the supply of the Russian establishment. In this ship embarked a reinforcement, consisting of a partner, Mr. John Clarke, five clerks, fifteen American labourers, and six Canadian *voyageurs*.

On October 10, 1811, the *Beaver* left New York, arrived off the mouth of the Columbia the 6th of May, 1812, and, running as near as possible, fired two signal guns. No answer was returned, nor was there any signal to be descried. Night coming on, the ship stood out to sea, and every heart drooped as the land faded away. On the following morning they again ran in within four miles of the shore, and fired other signal guns, but still without reply. A boat was then despatched, to sound the channel, and attempt an entrance; but returned without success, there being a tremendous swell and breakers. Signal guns were fired again in the evening, but equally in vain, and once more the ship stood off to sea for the night. The Captain now gave up all hope of finding any establish-



CASCADES OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER  
From a photograph



ment at the place, and indulged in the most gloomy apprehensions. He feared his predecessors had been massacred before they had reached their place of destination; or if they had erected a factory, that it had been surprised and destroyed by the natives.

The next morning the ship stood in for the third time, and fired three signal guns, when, to the great joy of the crew, three distinct guns were heard in answer, and a white flag was hoisted on Cape Disappointment. Captain Sowle, however, recollected the instructions given him by Mr. Astor, and determined to proceed with great circumspection, being well aware of Indian treachery and cunning.

On the following morning, May 9th, the vessel came to anchor off the cape, outside of the bar. Towards noon an Indian canoe was seen making for the ship, and a few moments afterwards, a barge was perceived following it. The hopes and fears of those on board of the ship were in tumultuous agitation as the boat drew nigh that was to let them know the fortunes of the enterprise and the fate of their predecessors. The Captain, on the other hand, did not let his curiosity get the better of his caution, but kept his men under arms to receive the visitors, those in the canoe proving to be Comcomly and six Indians, in the barge M'Dougal, M'Lellan, and eight Canadians. In a moment all fears were dispelled, and the *Beaver*, crossing the bar under their pilotage, anchored safely in Baker's Bay.

The arrival of the *Beaver* with a reinforcement and supplies gave new life and vigour to affairs at Astoria. These were means for extending the operations of the establishment, and founding interior trading-posts. Two parties were immediately set on foot to proceed severally under the command of Messrs. M'Kenzie and

Clarke, and establish posts above the forks of the Columbia, at points where most rivalry and opposition were apprehended from the Northwest Company.

A third party, headed by Mr. David Stuart, was to repair with supplies to the post of that gentleman on the Okanagan. In addition to these expeditions, a fourth was necessary to convey despatches to Mr. Astor, at New York, in place of those unfortunately lost by John Reed. The safe conveyance of these despatches was highly important, as by them Mr. Astor would receive an account of the state of the factory, and regulate his reinforcements and supplies accordingly. The mission, one of peril and hardship, was confided to Robert Stuart, who, though he had never been across the mountains, and a very young man, had given proofs of his competency to the task. Four trusty and well-tried men, who had come overland in Mr. Hunt's expedition, were given him as his guides and hunters. Mr. M'Lellan expressed his determination to take this opportunity of returning to the Atlantic States, a resolve in which he was joined by Mr. Crooks, who was ready to retrace his steps and brave every danger and hardship, rather than remain at Astoria.

The several parties we have mentioned all set off in company on the 29th of June, under a salute of cannon from the fort. Their number, collectively, was nearly sixty, consisting of partners and clerks, Canadian *voyageurs*, Sandwich Islanders, and American hunters; and they embarked in two barges and ten canoes.

After the departure of the different brigades, the *Beaver* prepared for her voyage along the coast, and her visit to the Russian establishment at New Archangel, where she was to carry supplies. It had been determined in the council of partners at Astoria that

Mr. Hunt should embark in this vessel, for the purpose of acquainting himself with the coasting trade, and of making arrangements with the commander of the Russian post, and that he should be relanded in October at Astoria by the *Beaver*, on her way to the Sandwich Islands and Canton.

The month of October elapsed without the return of the *Beaver*. November, December, January passed away, and still nothing was seen or heard of her. Gloomy apprehensions now began to be entertained. M'Dougal, who had now the charge of the establishment, no longer evinced the bustling confidence and buoyancy which once characterised him, for he gave way to the most abject despondency, decrying the whole enterprise, and foreboding nothing but evil.

While in this moody state, he was surprised, on the 16th of January, by the sudden appearance of M'Kenzie, wayworn and weather-beaten by a long wintry journey from his post on the Shahaptan. M'Kenzie had been heartily disgusted and disappointed at his post. It was in the midst of the Tushepaws, a powerful and warlike nation divided into many tribes, under different chiefs, who possessed innumerable horses, but, not having turned their attention to beaver trapping, had no furs to offer.

In this emergency M'Kenzie began to think of abandoning his unprofitable post, sending his goods to the posts of Clarke and David Stuart, who could make a better use of them, as they were in a good beaver country, and returning with his party to Astoria, to seek some better destination. With this intention he made his way to the post of Mr. Clarke, with whom he was in conference when Mr. McTavish, a partner of the Northwest Company, who had charge of the

rival trading-posts in that neighbourhood, came bustling in upon them. He had just received an express from Canada, containing the declaration of war and President Madison's proclamation, and he capped the climax of this obliging but warlike news by informing them that he was ordered to join the British armed ship *Isaac Todd* at the mouth of the Columbia about the beginning of March for the purpose of seizing the American post and of getting possession of the river trade.

This news determined M'Kenzie, who immediately returned to the Shahaptan, broke up his establishment, deposited his goods in caches, and hastening with all his people to Astoria, brought dismay to M'Dougal. They both gave up all hope of maintaining their post at Astoria, fearing the loss of the *Beaver*; they could receive no aid from the United States, as all the ports would be blockaded; and from England nothing could be expected but hostility. It was determined, therefore, to abandon the establishment in the course of the following spring, and return across the Rocky Mountains.

In the meantime, M'Kenzie set off for his post at the Shahaptan, to get his goods from the caches, and buy horses and provisions with them for the caravan across the mountains. He was charged with despatches from M'Dougal to Messrs. Stuart and Clarke, apprising them of the intended migration, that they might make timely preparations. He and his men ascended the river without any incident of importance, until they arrived in the eventful neighbourhood of the rapids. They made the portage of the narrows and the falls early in an afternoon, and, having partaken of a scanty meal, had a long evening on their hands.

On the opposite side of the river lay the village of



Wish-ram, of freebooting renown, where lived the savages who had maltreated Reed, and robbed him of his tin box of despatches, and who still retained his rifle as a trophy. M'Kenzie offered to cross the river and demand the rifle, if any one would accompany him. It was a hare-brained project; yet two volunteers promptly stepped forward: Alfred Seton, the clerk, and Joe de la Pierre, the cook. On landing, the trio freshly primed their rifles and pistols, and ascended to the village along a path winding for about a hundred yards among rocks and crags. Not a solitary being, man, woman, or child, greeted them, until, on entering the village, a boy made his appearance and pointed to a house of larger dimensions than the rest. They had to stoop when they entered it, and in an instant they found themselves in a large, rude chamber around which a large number of Indians were squatted in rows. A single glance sufficed to show the three the grim and dangerous assembly into which they had intruded, and that retreat was cut off by the men who blocked up the entrance.

When the chief had motioned for them to take their seats, a dead pause ensued. The grim warriors around sat like statues, each muffled in his robe, with his fierce eyes bent on the intruders.

"Keep your eyes on the chief while I am addressing him," said M'Kenzie to his companions. "Should he give any sign to his band, shoot him and make for the door."

He then made a regular speech, explaining the object of their visit, and proposing to give in exchange for the rifle two blankets, an axe, some beads and tobacco. When he had done, the chief began to address him in a low voice, but ended by working himself up

into a furious passion. He upbraided the white men for their sordid conduct in passing and repassing through their neighbourhood without giving them a blanket or any other article of goods, merely because they had no furs to barter in exchange, and he alluded, with menaces of vengeance, to the death of the Indian killed by the whites in the skirmish at the falls.

As the speaker proceeded, M'Kenzie and his companions gradually rose on their feet and brought their rifles to a horizontal position, the muzzle of M'Kenzie's piece being within three feet of the speaker's heart. They cocked their rifles and coolly advanced to the door, the Indians falling back in awe and suffering them to pass. As they emerged from this dangerous den, they took the precaution to keep along the tops of the rocks on their way back to the canoe, and reached their camp in safety, congratulating themselves on their escape, and feeling no desire to make a second visit to the grim warriors of Wish-ram.

M'Kenzie and his party resumed their journey the next morning. At some distance above the falls of the Columbia, they met two bark canoes coming down the river to the full chant of a set of Canadian *voyageurs*. It was a detachment of Northwesters, under the command of Mr. John George M'Tavish, bound, full of song and spirit, to the mouth of the Columbia, to await the arrival of the *Isaac Todd*.

M'Kenzie and M'Tavish came to a halt and encamped together for the night. The *voyageurs* of either party hailed each other as brothers and old "comrades," and they mingled together as if united by one common interest, instead of belonging to rival companies and trading under hostile flags.

In the morning they proceeded on their different

ways, in style corresponding to their different fortunes: the one toiling painfully against the stream, the other sweeping down gaily with the current.

M'Kenzie arrived safely at his deserted post on the Shahaptan, but found, to his chagrin, that his caches had been discovered and rifled by the Indians. He sent out men in all directions to endeavour to discover the thieves, and despatched a messenger to the posts of Messrs. Clarke and David Stuart, with the letters of Mr. M'Dougal. These two gentlemen had been very successful at their posts, and considered it rash to abandon, on the first difficulty, an enterprise of such great cost and ample promise. They made no arrangements, therefore, for leaving the country, but acted with a view to the maintenance of their new and prosperous establishments.

As the regular time approached when the partners of the interior posts were to rendezvous at the mouth of the Walla-Walla, on their way to Astoria, with the peltries they had collected, Mr. Clarke packed all his furs, and, leaving a clerk and four men to take charge of the post, departed on the 25th of May with the residue of his force. At the mouth of the Walla-Walla he found Messrs. Stuart and M'Kenzie awaiting them; the latter having recovered part of the goods stolen from his caches. The parties thus united formed a squadron of two boats and six canoes, with which they performed their voyage in safety down the river, and arrived at Astoria on the 12th of June, bringing with them a valuable stock of peltries.

## CHAPTER X

### LOVE AND WAR

THE partners found Mr. M'Dougal in all the bustle of preparation; having about nine days previously announced at the factory his intention of breaking up the establishment, and fixed upon the 1st of July for the time of departure. His old sympathies with the Northwest Company seemed to have revived. He had received M'Tavish and his party as though they were friends and allies, instead of being a party of observation, come to reconnoitre the state of affairs at Astoria, and to await the arrival of a hostile ship. For had they been left to themselves, they would have been starved off for want of provisions, or driven away by the Chinooks, who only wanted a signal from the factory to treat them as intruders and enemies.

M'Dougal was sorely disappointed at finding that Messrs. Stuart and Clarke had omitted to comply with his request to purchase horses and provisions for the caravan across the mountains, for it was now too late to make the necessary preparations in time for traversing the mountains before winter. In the meantime, the non-arrival of the annual ship and the probable loss of the *Beaver* and of Mr. Hunt had their effect upon the minds of Messrs. Stuart and Clarke, who with much reluctance at last consented to the plan of abandoning the country in the ensuing year.

Having made their arrangement, the four partners, on the 1st of July, signed a formal manifesto, stating the alarming state of their affairs, and as by the company's agreement they were authorised to abandon this undertaking and dissolve the concern if it should be found unprofitable, they now formally announced their intention to do so on the 1st day of June, of the ensuing year, unless in the interim they should receive the necessary support and supplies from Mr. Astor, or the stockholders, with orders to continue.

This instrument, accompanied by private letters of similar import, was delivered to Mr. M'Tavish, who departed on the 5th of July. He engaged to forward the despatches to Mr. Astor by the usual winter express sent overland by the Northwest Company.

Somewhat later in this same month of July, M'Dougal suddenly conceived the idea of seeking in marriage the daughter of Comcomly, the one-eyed potentate who held sway over the fishing tribe of Chinooks, and had long supplied the factory with smelts and sturgeons. Now, Comcomly was a great friend of M'Dougal, and pleased with the idea of having so distinguished a son-in-law; but so favourable a chance to benefit his own fortune was not likely to occur again, and must be made the most of.

At length the preliminaries were all happily adjusted. On the 20th of July, early in the afternoon, a squadron of canoes crossed over from the village of the Chinooks, bearing the royal family of Comcomly and all his court. A horse was in waiting to receive the princess, who was mounted behind one of the clerks, and thus conveyed to the fortress, where she was received by her expectant bridegroom. After copious ablutions had freed her from the paints and ointments of her bridal

toilet, she entered the nuptial state, the cleanest princess that had ever been known of the somewhat unctuous tribe of the Chinooks.

The honeymoon had scarce passed away when, about noon of the 20th of August, a ship was reported at the mouth of the river—a bit of news that produced a vast sensation. Was it the *Beaver* or the *Isaac Todd*? Was it peace or war? When at length the American flag was recognised by the straining eyes on shore, a great shout expressed the first joy of all, and then a welcome was thundered from the cannon of the fort; for it was an American ship, though a strange one, and on it was Mr. Hunt. Mr. Hunt was hailed as one risen from the dead, and his return was a signal for merriment almost equal to that which prevailed at the nuptials of M'Dougal.

The *Beaver*, after she had sailed from Astoria on the 4th of August, 1812, met with nothing worthy of particular mention in her voyage, and arrived at New Archangel on the 19th of August. The place at that time was the residence of Count Baranhoff, the governor of the different colonies; a rough, rugged, hospitable, hard-drinking old Russian; somewhat of a soldier, somewhat of a trader; above all, a boon companion.

The greatest annoyance to Mr. Hunt, however, was the delay to which he was subjected, for with all the governor's devotions to the bottle, he never lost sight of his own interest, and was as keen, not to say crafty, at a bargain as the most arrant water-drinker. To add to the delay Mr. Hunt was to be paid for his cargo in seal skins, for which he must proceed to a seal-catching establishment, which the Russian company had at the island of St. Paul, in the Sea of Kamtschatka. Setting sail thither, after having spent forty-five days

at New Archangel boosing and bargaining with its roystering commander, he arrived at St. Paul on the 31st of October; by which time, according to arrangement, he ought to have been back at Astoria. The operation of loading the ship was somewhat slow, for it was necessary to overhaul and inspect every pack of skins, to prevent imposition, and the peltries had then to be conveyed in large boats to the ship, which was some little distance from the shore, standing off and on. It happened one night, while Mr. Hunt was on shore with some of the crew, there arose a terrible gale that drove the ship far off to sea.

At length, on the 13th of November, the *Beaver* made her appearance, badly damaged in her canvas and rigging. Mr. Hunt lost no time in hurrying the residue of the cargo on board of her; then, bidding adieu to his seal-fishing friends and his whalebone habitation, he put forth once more to sea.

He was now for making the best of his way to Astoria, and fortunate would it have been for the interests of that place, and the interests of Mr. Astor, had he done so; but, unluckily, a perplexing question rose in his mind. Would the ship be able to stand the hard gales to be expected in making Columbia River at this season? Was it prudent also at this boisterous time of the year to risk the valuable cargo which she now had on board, by crossing and recrossing the dangerous bar of that river? Further, the lateness of the season and the unforeseen delays the ship had encountered at New Archangel, and by being obliged to proceed to St. Paul, had put her so much back in her calculated time that there was a risk of her arriving so late at Canton as to come to a bad market, both for the sale of her peltries and the purchase of a return cargo. He

considered it to the interest of the company, therefore, that he should proceed at once to the Sandwich Islands; there await the arrival of the annual vessel from New York, take passage in her to Astoria, and suffer the *Beaver* to continue on to Canton.

Mr. Hunt persuaded himself that it was a matter of necessity, and that the distressed condition of the ship left him no alternative. They accordingly stood for the Sandwich Islands, where the ship underwent the necessary repairs, and again put to sea on the 1st of January, 1813, leaving Mr. Hunt at the islands. The *Beaver* arrived safe at Canton, where she was laid up to await the return of peace.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Hunt soon saw reason to repent the resolution he had adopted in altering the destination of the ship. His stay at the Sandwich Islands was prolonged far beyond all expectation. At length, about the 20th of June, the ship *Albatross* arrived from China, bringing the first tidings of the war to the Sandwich Islands. Mr. Hunt was no longer in doubt and perplexity as to the reason of the non-appearance of the annual ship, and, concluding that the Astorians would be in want of provisions, he chartered the *Albatross* for two thousand dollars to land him, with some supplies, at the mouth of the Columbia, where he arrived after a year's seafaring, on the 20th of August.

Mr. Hunt was overwhelmed with surprise when he learnt the resolution taken by the partners to abandon Astoria. He soon found, however, that matters had gone too far, and the minds of his colleagues had become too firmly bent upon the measure, to render any opposition of avail. He was beset, too, with the same disparaging accounts of the interior trade and of the



whole concerns and prospects of the company that had been rendered to Mr. Astor. His own experience had been full of perplexities and discouragements. By degrees, therefore, he was brought to acquiesce in the step taken by his colleagues, as perhaps advisable under the circumstances; his only care was to wind up the business with as little further loss as possible to Mr. Astor. A large stock of valuable furs must be got to a market; and the twenty-five Sandwich Islanders in the employ of the company must be restored to their native country. For these purposes he must seek a ship, as the present one was not available, being bound to the Marquesas.

Having arranged matters during a sojourn of six days at Astoria, Mr. Hunt set sail again in the *Albatross* on the 26th of August, and arrived without accident at the Marquesas. He had not been there long when Porter arrived in the frigate *Essex*, bringing in a number of stout London whalers as prizes, having made a sweeping cruise in the Pacific. From Commodore Porter he received the alarming intelligence that the British frigate *Phæbe*, with a storeship mounting several pieces, had arrived at Rio Janeiro, where she had been joined by the sloops of war *Cherub* and *Raccoon*, and that they had all sailed in company on the 6th of July, for the Pacific bound to the Columbia River.

In this tantalising state of suspense, Mr. Hunt was detained at the Marquesas until November 23d, when he proceeded in the *Albatross* to the Sandwich Islands. He still cherished a faint hope that, notwithstanding the war and all other discouraging circumstances, the annual ship might have been sent by Mr. Astor, and might have touched at the islands and proceeded to the Columbia. In this he did but justice to Mr. Astor;

for he found at Honolulu a remnant of the crew of the annual ship, and learned from the captain of the *Lark*, as she was called, how her prosperous voyage had ended in storm and wreck near those islands, to which they drifted after much exposure.

Mr. Hunt immediately purchased a brig called the *Pedler*, and put Captain Northrop in command of her, setting sail for Astoria on the 22d January, and intending to remove the property thence to the Russian settlements on the north-west coast, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the British.

## CHAPTER XI

### TREACHERY OR VALOUR ?

ABOUT five weeks after Mr. Hunt had sailed from Astoria, Mr. M'Kenzie set off for the posts of Messrs. Stuart and Clarke, to apprise them of the new arrangements determined upon in the recent conference of the partners at the factory. He had not ascended the river a hundred miles when he met a squadron of ten canoes commanded by M'Tavish and another partner of the Northwest Company. With them Mr. Clarke came as passenger, the alarming news having brought him down from his post on the Spokan; for they were on their way to meet a British frigate and an armed transport at the mouth of the Columbia. Accordingly Mr. M'Kenzie returned too, in view of the crisis that had been reached.

The Northwest Brigade, seventy-five strong, reached Astoria on the 7th of October, 1813, encamping under the guns of the fort, and displaying the British colours. On the next day the visitors proposed to M'Dougal to purchase the entire stock of goods and furs belonging to the company, both at Astoria and in the interior. They made their demands in a peremptory tone, and seemed disposed to dictate like conquerors, although they had lost their ammunition, and had no goods to trade with the natives for provisions. In fact, they were so destitute that M'Dougal had absolutely to feed

them, while he negotiated with them. He, on the contrary, was well lodged and victualled; had sixty men, with arms, ammunition, boats, and everything requisite either for defence or retreat. The party, beneath the guns of his fort, were at his mercy; should an enemy appear in the offing, he could pack up the most valuable part of the property and retire to some place of concealment, or make off for the interior.

To the great indignation of the native Americans, these considerations had no weight with Mr. M'Dougal, or were overruled by other motives. The terms of sale were lowered by him to the standard fixed by Messrs. M'Tavish and Stuart, and an agreement was executed on the 16th of October, by which the furs and merchandise of all kinds in the country, belonging to Mr. Astor, passed into the possession of the Northwest Company at about a third of their value.<sup>1</sup> A safe passage through the Northwest posts was guaranteed to such as did not choose to enter into the service of that company, and the amount of wages due to them was to be deducted from the price paid for Astoria.

The conduct and motives of Mr. M'Dougal throughout the whole of this proceeding were strongly questioned by the other partners. He always insisted, however, that he made the best bargain that circumstances would permit; the frigate being hourly expected and the whole property liable to capture; that the return of Mr. Hunt was problematical, the frigate intending to cruise along the coast for two years, and clear it of all American vessels. Of these

<sup>1</sup> Not quite \$40,000 was allowed for furs worth upwards of \$100,000. Moreover, the goods and merchandise for the Indian trade ought to have brought three times the amount for which they were sold.

suspicious this only can be said, that Mr. M'Dougal, shortly after concluding this agreement, became a member of the Northwest Company, and received a share productive of a handsome income.

On the 30th of November, a ship of war, which proved to be the British sloop of war *Raccoon*, doubled Cape Disappointment and came to anchor in Baker's Bay. The officers of the *Raccoon* were in high spirits, for the agents of the Northwest Company, in instigating the expedition, had talked of immense booty to be made by the fortunate captors of Astoria, so that not a midshipman but revelled in dreams of ample prize-money, nor a lieutenant that would have sold his chance for a thousand pounds. Their disappointment, therefore, may easily be conceived when they learned that their warlike attack upon Astoria had been forestalled by a snug commercial arrangement; that their anticipated booty had become British property in the regular course of traffic, and that all this had been effected by the very company which had been instrumental in getting them sent on what they now stigmatised as a fool's errand. They felt as if they had been duped and made tools of by a set of shrewd men of traffic, who had employed them to crack the nut, while they carried off the kernel. In a word, M'Dougal found himself so ungraciously received by his countrymen on board of the ship that he was glad to cut short his visit and return to shore.

Old Comcomly had beheld, with dismay, the arrival of a "big war canoe" displaying the British flag. Trembling for the power of his white son-in-law and the new-fledged grandeur of his daughter, he assembled his warriors in all haste. "King George," said he, "has sent his great canoe to destroy the fort and make

slaves of all the inhabitants. Shall we suffer it? 'The Americans are the first white men that have fixed themselves in the land. They have treated us like brothers. Their great chief has taken my daughter to be his squaw: we are, therefore, as one people.'

His warriors all determined to stand by the Americans to the last, and to this effect they came painted and armed for battle. Comcomly made a spirited war-speech to his son-in-law. He offered to kill every one of King George's men that should attempt to land. It was an easy matter. The ship could not approach within six miles of the fort; the crew could land only in boats. The woods reached to the water's edge; in these he and his warriors would conceal themselves and shoot down the enemy as fast as they put foot on shore.

M'Dougal assured Comcomly, however, that his solicitude for the safety of himself and the princess was superfluous; for, though the ship belonged to King George, her crew would not injure the Americans or their Indian allies. He advised him and his warriors, therefore, to lay aside their weapons and war shirts, wash off the paint from their faces and bodies, and appear like clean and civil savages, to receive the strangers courteously.

On the 12th of December the fate of Astoria was consummated by a regular ceremonial. Captain Black, attended by his officers, entered the fort, caused the British standard to be erected, broke a bottle of wine, and declared, in a loud voice, that he took possession of the establishment and of the country in the name of his Britannic Majesty, changing the name of Astoria to that of Fort George.

The Indian warriors who had offered their services

to repel the strangers were present on this occasion. When it was explained to them as being a friendly arrangement and transfer, they shook their heads grimly, and regretted that they had complied with M'Dougal's wishes in laying aside their arms. Commonly no longer prided himself upon his white son-in-law, but said that his daughter had made a mistake, and, instead of getting a great warrior for a husband, had married herself to a squaw.

Events had moved so rapidly that when Mr. Hunt, on the brig *Pedler*, reached Astoria on the last day of February, 1813, he found no goods or furs to remove and that his trusted associate, M'Dougal, had acted, if not a perfidious, certainly a craven part. With difficulty he secured the papers of the Pacific Fur Company; and then, remitting by the overland party to Mr. Astor the drafts on the Northwest Company by which the transfer had been completed, he bade a final adieu to Astoria on the 3d of April, 1814.

The next day Messrs. Clarke, M'Kenzie, David Stuart, and such other of the Astorians as had not entered the service of the Northwest Company set out to cross the Rocky Mountains. One incident of their return trip is worth recounting for the light it throws on the fate of several men already mentioned in this story, and as a fitting end to the tragedy of Astoria.

Near the mouth of the Walla Walla they were hailed in French by a squaw who proved to be the wife of Pierre Dorion, the interpreter. She and her two children had, as usual, accompanied her husband during the previous summer, when he was assigned as hunter to the party of Mr. John Reed, who was to trap along the Snake River. During the autumn the party lost two

of the *voyageurs*, one by death and the other by desertion, but the numbers were increased by their finding Robinson, Hoback, and Rezner, the three hunters who had been detached by Mr. Hunt the year before.

After Reed had built his winter quarters on the Snake River, he divided his party by sending Rezner, Le Clerc, and Dorion a five days' journey away. There they built a hut and trapped with success, Dorion's wife dressing the skins and preparing the meals. She was thus engaged one evening early in January, when Le Clerc staggered into the hut, pale and bleeding, and with scarcely strength left to tell her that Rezner and her husband had been surprised and killed, while at their traps, by a party of Indians.

The poor woman showed instantly that presence of mind for which she had frequently been noted. With great difficulty she caught two of the horses, helped the wounded man on one, and mounted the other with her two children, and hurried from the dangerous neighbourhood. After four days passed in utter misery, during which Le Clerc died, she reached Mr. Reed's house, only to find it the scene of blood and massacre. In fresh horror the resolute woman kept on until, near the upper waters of the Walla Walla River, she chose a lonely ravine for her winter refuge. She built a rude wigwam beside a mountain spring, and killed her horses for food, dragging out the winter thus until the middle of March. Then, slinging her pack across her back, she trudged to the mouth of the Walla Walla, where she was well treated by the Indians of that name, and had been among them nearly two weeks when the party of Astorians, returning overland, was espied and hailed.

The narrative of the Indian woman completed the



tale of the adventures of honest John Reed, of Pierre Dorion, the hybrid interpreter, and, among others, of that trio of Kentuckians, Robinson, Rezner, and Hoback, who twice turned back, when on their homeward way, and lingered in the wilderness to perish by the hands of savages.

The return parties from Astoria, both by land and sea, experienced many adventures and mishaps, and reached New York at different times, bearing to Mr. Astor tidings of the unfortunate end of his enterprise.

At the return of peace in 1814, Astoria and the adjacent country reverted in name to the United States on the principle of a return to the condition existing before the war; and in 1816 Congress passed a law prohibiting all traffic of British traders within the boundaries of the United States. This measure compelled the Northwest Company to part with such of its American trade as centred about the Great Lakes; but along the Columbia River and its chief tributaries the company was now in complete occupation, holding the posts which Mr. Astor had established, and carrying on a trade throughout the neighbouring region in defiance of this prohibitory law, which, in effect, was a dead letter beyond the mountains.

The ferocious and bloody contests which had taken place between the rival trading parties of the Northwest and Hudson Bay Companies had shown what might be expected from commercial feuds in the lawless depths of the wilderness. Mr. Astor did not think it advisable, therefore, to attempt the revival of his favourite enterprise without the protection of the American flag, under which his people might rally in case of need. He accordingly made an informal overture to

the President of the United States, Mr. Madison, through Mr. Gallatin, offering to renew his enterprise, and to re-establish Astoria, provided it would be protected by the American flag, and made a military post; stating that the whole force required would not exceed a lieutenant's command. But no step was taken by the government, and the favourable moment for the re-occupation of Astoria was suffered to pass unimproved.

Meanwhile, the British trading establishments struck their roots so deep in the rich field opened by Mr. Astor that soon American sovereignty over the region was called in question, and in 1818 the United States agreed with Great Britain to a dual control for ten years of the country on the north-west coast of America, westward of the Rocky Mountains, and that inhabitants of either country might trade there on equal terms, and with equal right of navigating all the rivers. At the end of the period of ten years (1828) this neutral arrangement was extended for an additional ten years; and then it became a dispute which pressed hard for settlement during almost another decade. Finally, in 1846, after several vain attempts to come to an agreement, a compromise was effected and the boundary line was fixed at the parallel of  $49^{\circ}$  N. The popular cry of the day, "Fifty-four forty or fight," would have changed the course of empire, if it had been acted upon thirty years before, at a time when full possession of this whole region might have been taken quietly, as a matter of course, and a military post established without dispute at Astoria.

## CHAPTER XII

### READJUSTMENT AND GROWTH

IF we look at the series of events we have recorded in their relation to this great commercial undertaking, we must name it a magnificent enterprise, well concerted, and carried on without regard to difficulties or expense. A succession of adverse circumstances and cross purposes, however, beset it almost from the outset: the loss of the *Tonguin*, on her first trading voyage; the variations of the *Beaver* from the course laid down for her, and the consequent detention of Mr. Hunt from his post, when his presence there was of vital importance to the enterprise; the breaking out of the War of 1812 with its accompanying risks and difficulties; and finally the loss of the supply ship *Lark* added to the tissue of misadventure.

That Mr. Astor battled resolutely against every difficulty, and pursued his course in defiance of every loss, has been sufficiently shown. Had he been seconded by suitable agents and properly protected by the government, the ultimate failure of his plan might have been averted. It was his great misfortune that his agents were not imbued with his own spirit. Some had not capacity sufficient to comprehend the real nature and extent of his scheme; most were foreigners in birth, feeling, and interest, and had been brought up in the service of a rival company. Whatever sym-

pathies they might originally have had with him were destroyed by the war. They looked upon his cause as desperate, and considered only how they might regain a situation under their former employers. The absence of Mr. Hunt, the only real representative of Mr. Astor, at the time of the surrender to the Northwest Company, completed the series of cross purposes that ruined the Pacific Fur Company, and perhaps delayed for half a century Mr. Astor's hope of a commercial empire beyond the mountains, peopled by "free and independent Americans, and linked to us by ties of blood and interest."

In consequence of the apathy and neglect of the American Government, Mr. Astor abandoned all thoughts of regaining Astoria, and made no further attempt to extend his enterprises beyond the Rocky Mountains; and the Northwest Company considered themselves the lords of the country. They did not long enjoy unmolested the sway which they had attained; for a fierce competition ensued between them and their old rivals the Hudson Bay Company, which was carried on at great cost and sacrifice, and occasionally with the loss of life. It ended in the ruin of most of the partners of the Northwest Company; and the merging of the relics of that establishment, in 1821, in the rival association. From that time, the Hudson Bay Company enjoyed a monopoly of the Indian trade from the coast of the Pacific to the Rocky Mountains, and for a considerable extent north and south. They removed their emporium from Astoria to Fort Vancouver, a strong post on the Columbia River about sixty miles from its mouth, whence they furnished their interior posts and sent forth their brigades of trappers.

The War of 1812 in part not only ruined Mr. Astor's

enterprise in the Pacific, but it also suspended the operations of his Southwest Company, that branch of the American Fur Company which he had organised in 1811 to succeed the Mackinaw Company. Thus, in 1815, he found it necessary to begin all over again in his effort to become an independent *producer* of furs; he was already perhaps the greatest fur merchant of the world.

After Congress in 1816 forbade foreign traders to engage in the fur trade within the borders of the United States, Mr. Astor took over the business of the Northwest Company south of the Canadian boundary, and, combining that with the remnant of his Southwest Company, merged all in the American Fur Company. By 1817 these rearrangements were in working order, and, with the island of Mackinac as the emporium of the trade, operations were extended not only around the Great Lakes, but all through the region of the lakes and streams that form the upper waters of the Mississippi River.

Steady growth marked the development of the American Fur Company during the next few years. Ramsay Crooks, who will readily be recalled in connection with Mr. Hunt's disasters on the Snake River, became the active head of the business, and put tireless energy into it. He was practically the general agent of the company as well as head of the Western Department after it was established at St. Louis. When, in 1834, Mr. Astor sold out his interest in the company, Mr. Crooks bought the Northern Department and the company's name and became president of the American Fur Company.

Mr. Crooks's efforts at Mackinac were ably seconded by Robert Stuart, another Astorian, who carried the

despatches overland to Mr. Astor, setting out in July, 1812,<sup>1</sup> after John Reed had met with disaster while on the same mission. Crooks and M'Lellan returned with him, sharing the perils of that protracted ten months' journey.

On the other hand, the efforts of the American Fur Company to establish itself in the Missouri trade lead to no permanent results, chiefly for the reason that that trade was in the hands of the St. Louis traders; and they refused to share it with any outsiders, least of all with a rival who was powerful enough possibly to monopolise it all. They showed their opposition from the beginning of the Pacific Fur Company. Mr. Hunt's troubles with the Missouri Fur Company and especially with its most active partner and partisan, Mr. Manuel Lisa, have already been mentioned; and from that time forth, for more than ten years, they maintained a narrow, losing hostility, refusing to admit Mr. Astor as a partner, and blocked his efforts to secure an opening through any of the leading establishments engaged in the fur trade.

In 1823 the American Fur Company established itself at St. Louis quite independently of the old houses, and assigned to this, its Western Department, the trade of the Missouri and the lower posts on the Mississippi. A year later a temporary alliance was made with Stone, Bostwick, and Company to act as agents and manage this department; and finally, in 1827, the long desired connection was made with Bernard Pratte and Company, who comprised the strongest traders in St. Louis, and who managed the department with notable ability during the great activities that marked the fur trade for the next twenty years.

<sup>1</sup> For details of this journey see *Astoria*, chapters xliv.-li.

Later in that same year, another fortunate combination was made by the American Fur Company—that with the Columbia Fur Company. This company had been formed by some of the best men in the famous Northwest Company, who had been crowded out of their places when that company succumbed to the fierce competition with the Hudson Bay Company and in 1821 fell into its hands. They quickly built up along the Great Lakes and on the rivers to the west of them an able opposition to the American Company. In fact, so successful were they that they were made partners of the American Fur Company and conducted thereafter the affairs of the upper Missouri, of course, withdrawing from their separate operations around the Great Lakes. This new department was known as the Upper Missouri Outfit, “U. M. O.,” and, beginning at Sioux City, Iowa, was gradually extended to the headwaters of the river.

Under the able trader, Kenneth M'Kenzie, recently of the Columbia Fur Company, a definite advance from the Mandan country toward the sources of the Missouri River was begun in 1828. In that year Fort Union (at first called Floyd) was built at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. Through an old trapper named Berger, M'Kenzie succeeded in opening negotiations with the hostile and ever treacherous Blackfoot Indians, and as a result caused Fort Piegan to be built at the junction of the Marias with the Missouri River. As this post was found burned, when the resident agent returned in the fall of 1832 with his new trading outfit Fort M'Kenzie was built six miles up the Marias River. This stronghold secured there for the company a permanent foothold among the Blackfeet.

Also in 1832, M'Kenzie built Fort Cass at the point

where the Big Horn empties into the Yellowstone, thus tapping the Crow country, and completing the three river bases from which the company traded as long as it existed: Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone, Fort M'Kenzie on the Marias, and Fort Cass on the Big Horn. Into the mountain trade the company never entered so completely or profitably; for, although that had already become thoroughly developed, it called for an organisation more mobile and leaders more active and eager than the great company had yet produced.

The difficulties experienced in 1808 by Mr. Andrew Henry of the Missouri Company, the first American to trap upon the headwaters of the Columbia, and the frightful hardships of Wilson P. Hunt, Ramsay Crooks, Robert Stuart, and other intrepid Astorians, in their ill-fated expeditions across the mountains, seemed for a time to check all further enterprise in that direction. The American traders contented themselves with following up the streams on the Atlantic side of the mountains, but forbore to attempt those great, snow-crowned sierras.

One of the first to revive the expeditions to the mountains was General Ashley,<sup>1</sup> of Missouri, a man

<sup>1</sup> William Henry Ashley (1778-1838), the most noted and successful of the St. Louis traders, entered the mountain trade in partnership with Andrew Henry, in 1822, visiting the Yellowstone in that year; in the next, he was defeated in the affair at the Aricara village; in 1824 he was present at the rendezvous in Green River Valley, and, though badly shipwrecked later, he continued his explorations to the south of the Great Salt Lake, and returned thence in 1825 with 130 packs of beaver skins—a phenomenal cargo for those days. After one more visit to the mountains, he sold his business in 1826 to Smith, Jackson, and Sublette, and devoted his energies to political life, serving in Congress from 1831-1837.



whose courage and achievements in the prosecution of his enterprises rendered him famous in the Far West. In conjunction with Mr. Henry, already mentioned,<sup>1</sup> he established a post on the Yellowstone River in 1822, and in 1823 pushed a band of trappers across the mountains to the banks of the Green River. This attempt was followed up by himself and others until a complete system of trapping in the mountains was devised, the most interesting feature of which was the rendezvous in place of the fixed trading-posts. In other words, some place of general meeting was appointed where the various parties could assemble each year with the product of their work and renew their equipment and get supplies.

In this wild and warlike school a number of leaders sprang up, originally in the employ, subsequently partners, of Ashley. The association commenced by General Ashley underwent various modifications until he was succeeded by Captain William Sublette, a native of Kentucky, and of game descent; his maternal grandfather, Colonel Wheatley, a companion of Boone, having been one of the pioneers of the West, celebrated in Indian warfare, and killed in one of the contests of the "Bloody Ground." In 1830, the association took the name of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, of which Captain Sublette and Robert Campbell were prominent members.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 36.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PIERRE'S HOLE

**I**T was in the midst of this renewal of old interests, and of the enthusiasm of new ones, that Captain Bonneville of the United States Army came to New York to secure support for a trading expedition which he wished to lead through unexplored regions of the Rocky Mountains. Having obtained leave of absence from the War Department, on his offering to collect for it information concerning the country and the wild tribes he might visit, he was equally successful in interesting in the enterprise several merchants of the metropolis, who raised sufficient funds to carry the scheme into effect.

Thus backed and provided, Captain Bonneville was able to shape his day-dream into a practical reality and gratify the ardent desire of his heart. Enlisting a party of one hundred and ten men, most of whom had been in the Indian country, and some of whom were experienced hunters and trappers, he took his departure from Fort Osage, on the Missouri, on the 1st of May, 1832.

It is not easy to do justice to the exulting feelings of the worthy Captain at finding himself at the head of a stout band of hunters, trappers, and woodmen, fairly launched on the broad prairies, with his face to the boundless West. The tamest inhabitant of cities, the

veriest spoiled child of civilisation, feels his heart dilate and his pulse beat high on finding himself on horse-back in the glorious wilderness; what then must be the excitement of one whose imagination had been stimulated by a residence on the frontier, and to whom the wilderness was a region of romance!

On the 6th of May the travellers passed the last border habitation, and bade a long farewell to the ease and security of civilisation; and their buoyant and clamorous spirits gradually subsided as they entered upon the difficulties of the march. On the 24th of May, as the caravan was slowly journeying up the banks of the Nebraska, the hunters came galloping back, giving the alarm that a large war-party of Crow Indians were just above, on the river. The Captain knew these savages to be the most roving, warlike, crafty, and predatory tribes of the mountains; horse-stealers of the first order, and easily provoked to acts of violence. Orders were accordingly given to prepare for action, and every one promptly took the post that had been assigned him.

In a little while the Crow warriors emerged from among the bluffs, fine martial-looking fellows, painted and arrayed for war, and mounted on horses decked out with all kinds of wild trappings. They came galloping forward in a body, as if about to make a furious charge, but, when close at hand, opened to the right and left, and wheeled in wide circles round the travellers, whooping and yelling like maniacs.

This done, their mock fury sank into a calm, and the chief approached the Captain, who had remained warily drawn up, and extended to him the hand of friendship. The pipe of peace was smoked, and all was good fellowship.

The Crows were in pursuit of a band of Cheyennes, and a few days previously had discovered the party of Captain Bonneville. They had dogged it for a time in secret, astonished at the long train of waggons and oxen, and especially struck with the sight of a cow and calf quietly following the caravan, supposing them to be some kind of tame buffalo. "Now that we have met you," said their chief to Captain Bonneville, "and have seen these marvels with our own eyes, our hearts are glad." In fact, nothing could exceed the curiosity evinced by these people as to the objects before them. Waggons had never been seen by them before; but the calf was the peculiar object of their admiration. They watched it with intense interest as it licked the hands accustomed to feed it, and were struck with the mild expression of its countenance and its perfect docility, feeling sure that it was the "great medicine" of the white party.

During the day and the night that the Crows were encamped in company with the travellers their conduct was friendly in the extreme. In fact, not until after separation on the following morning did the Captain and his men ascertain that the Crows had contrived to empty the pockets of their white brothers, to filch the buttons from their coats, and, above all, to make free with their hunting knives. The Captain was well pleased with the opportunity to gain some knowledge of the "unsophisticated sons of nature," and had to be content with this one experience until he reached his chosen ground in the Rockies.

His route was the one already in common use by the mountain traders and was later to be known as the Oregon Trail. It lead up the valleys of the Platte and the Sweetwater rivers, through South Pass, and to the

Green River, where he arrived about noon on the 27th of July. On the day before, about eleven o'clock in the morning, a great cloud of dust appeared in the rear on the trail of the party. A scouting party soon returned making signals that all was well, and were quickly followed by a band of sixty mounted trappers belonging to the American Fur Company, who were headed by a Mr. Fontenelle, an experienced "partisan," and were bound for the annual rendezvous at Pierre's Hole.

As the plain ahead of them was destitute of grass and water, and as the Green River was still some distance away, both parties were compelled to push forward with all possible speed, reaching the river next day quite knocked out by the exertion. During their brief but social encampment together, Fontenelle had managed to win over a number of Delaware Indians whom the Captain had brought with him, and on whose services as hunters he had counted securely. This was his first taste of the boasted strategy of the fur traders. That he might, in some measure, however, be even with his competitor, he despatched two scouts to look out for the band of free trappers who were to meet Fontenelle in this neighbourhood, and to endeavour to bring them to his camp.

As it would be necessary to remain some time in this neighbourhood, Captain Bonneville proceeded to fortify his camp with breastworks of logs and pickets, precautions that were peculiarly necessary, from the bands of Blackfeet Indians which were roving about the neighbourhood. They were a treacherous race, and had cherished a lurking hostility to the whites ever since one of their tribe was killed by Mr. Lewis, the associate of Clark in his exploring expedition across the Rocky Mountains.

Leaving Captain Bonneville and his band within their fortified camp in the Green River Valley, we shall step back and accompany a party of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in its progress, with supplies from St. Louis, to the annual rendezvous, at Pierre's Hole. This party consisted of sixty men, well mounted and conducting a line of pack-horses. They were commanded by Captain William Sublette, a partner in the company, and by Mr. Robert Campbell, one of the pioneers of the trade beyond the mountain, who had commanded trapping parties there in times of the greatest peril.

As these worthy compeers were on their route to the frontier, they fell in with another expedition, likewise on its way to the mountains. This was a party of New Englanders who were commanded by Mr. Nathaniel J. Wyeth, of Boston. This gentleman had conceived an idea that a profitable fishery for salmon might be established on the Columbia River, and connected with the fur trade. He had, accordingly, invested his capital in goods for the Indian trade, and had enlisted a number of eastern men who unluckily had never been in the Far West, and knew nothing of the wilderness.

With all their aptitude at expedient and resource, Wyeth and his men felt themselves completely at a loss when they reached the frontier and found that the wilderness required a kind of experience in which they were totally deficient. Not one of the party, excepting the leader, had ever seen an Indian or handled a rifle; they were without guide or interpreter, and were totally unacquainted with woodcraft and the modes of making their way among savage hordes, and of subsisting themselves during long marches over wild mountains and barren plains.

In this predicament Captain Sublette found them at the little frontier town of Independence, in Missouri, and took them in tow. His men gave their Yankee comrades some lessons in hunting and some insight into the art and mystery of dealing with the Indians, and they all arrived without accident at the upper branches of the Platte River.

In the course of their march, Mr. Fitzpatrick, the partner of the company who was resident at that time beyond the mountains, came down from the rendezvous at Pierre's Hole to meet them and hurry them forward. He travelled in company with them until they reached the Sweetwater; then, taking a couple of horses, one for the saddle and the other as a pack-horse, he started back to make arrangements for their arrival, that he might begin his hunting campaign before the rival company.

Fitzpatrick, as he was pursuing his lonely course up the Green River Valley, descried several horsemen at a distance, and came to a halt to reconnoitre. He supposed them to be some detachment from the rendezvous, or a party of friendly Indians. They perceived him, and setting up the war-whoop, dashed forward at full speed: he saw at once his mistake and his peril—they were Blackfeet. Springing upon his fleetest horse, and abandoning the other to the enemy, he made for the mountains, and succeeded in escaping up one of the most dangerous defiles. For several days he remained lurking among rocks and precipices, and almost famished, having but one remaining charge in his rifle, which he kept for self-defence.

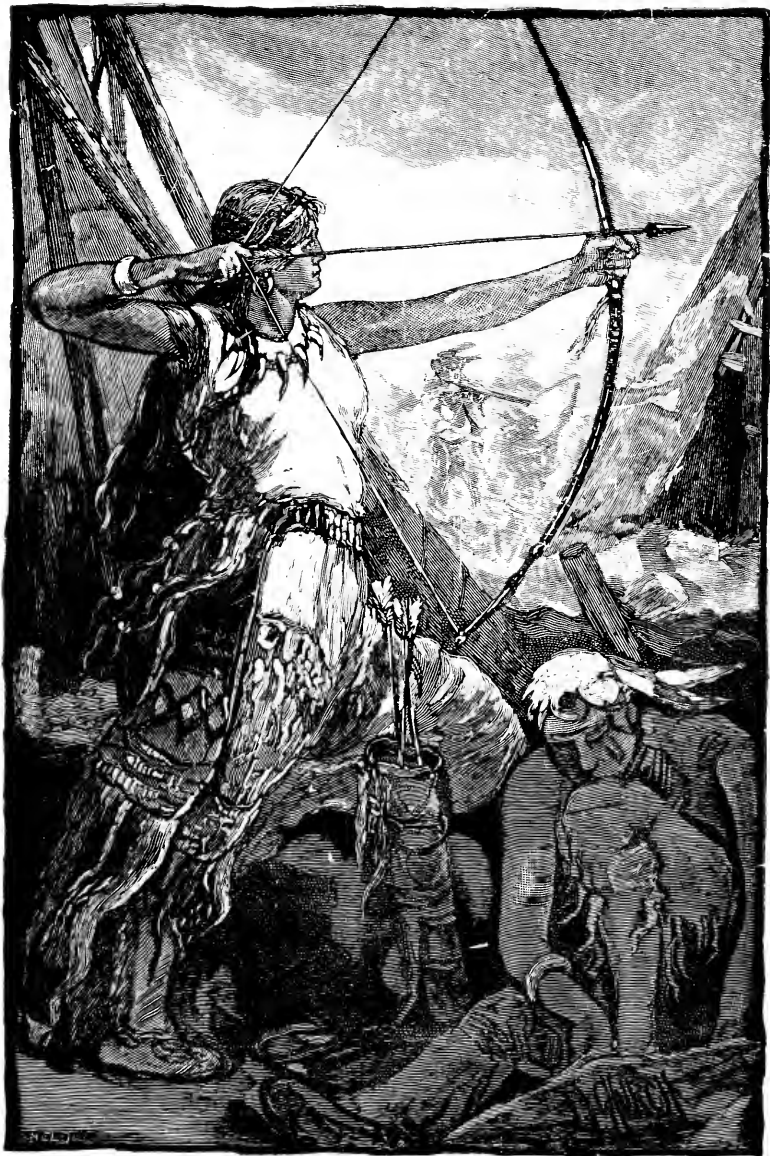
In the meantime, Sublette and Campbell, with their fellow-traveller, Wyeth, had pursued their march unmolested, and arrived in the Green River Valley,

totally unconscious that there was any lurking enemy at hand. They had encamped one night on the banks of a small stream, when about midnight a band of Indians burst upon their camp, with horrible yells and whoops and a discharge of guns and arrows. The camp was instantly in arms; but the Indians retreated with yells of exultation, carrying off several of the horses, under cover of the night.

They continued their march the next morning, keeping scouts ahead and upon their flanks, and arrived without further molestation at Pierre's Hole. The first inquiry of Captain Sublette, on reaching the rendezvous, was for Fitzpatrick. He had not arrived, nor had any intelligence been received concerning him. Great uneasiness was now entertained lest he should have fallen into the hands of the Blackfeet who had made the midnight attack upon the camp. It was a matter of general joy, therefore, when he made his appearance. He had lurked for several days among the mountains; at length he escaped the vigilance of his enemies in the night, and was so fortunate as to meet two Iroquois hunters, who, being on horseback, conveyed him without further difficulty to the rendezvous.

In the valley called Pierre's Hole was congregated the motley populace connected with the fur trade. Here the two rival companies had their encampments, with their retainers of all kinds. Here, also, the savage tribes connected with the trade, the Nez Percés and Flatheads, had pitched their lodges beside the streams, and with their squaws awaited the distribution of goods and finery. There was, moreover, a band of fifteen free trappers, commanded by a gallant leader from Arkansas, named Sinclair, who held their encampment a little apart from the rest.





HEROISM OF A WOMAN OF THE NEZ PERCÉS  
Engraved from a drawing by F. S. Church



The arrival of Captain Sublette with supplies put the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in full activity. The wares and merchandise were quickly opened, and as quickly disposed of to trappers and Indians; the usual excitement and revelry took place, after which all hands began to disperse to their several destinations.

On the 17th of July, a small brigade of fourteen trappers, led by Milton Sublette, brother of the captain, set out toward the south-west, accompanied by Sinclair and his fifteen free trappers; Wyeth, also, and his New England band of beaver hunters and salmon fishers, now dwindled down to eleven, took this opportunity to prosecute their cruise in the wilderness with such experienced pilots. On the second morning, just as they were raising their camp, they observed a long line of people pouring down a defile of the mountains. They at first supposed them to be Fontenelle and his party, whose arrival had been daily expected. Wyeth, however, soon perceived they were Indians in two parties, forming, in the whole, about one hundred and fifty persons, men, women, and children. They had perceived the trappers before they were themselves discovered, and came down yelling and whooping into the plain.

One of the trappers of Sublette's brigade, a half-breed, named Antoine Godin, now mounted his horse and rode forth as if to hold a conference. He was the son of an Iroquois hunter who had been cruelly murdered by members of this same tribe of Blackfeet at a small stream below the mountains, which still bears his name. In company with Antoine rode forth a Flathead Indian, whose once powerful tribe had been completely broken down in their wars with the Blackfeet. Both of them, therefore, cherished the most

vengeful hostility against these marauders of the mountains. The Blackfeet came to a halt. One of the chiefs advanced singly and unarmed, bearing the pipe of peace; but Antoine and the Flathead were pre-disposed to hostility, and pretended to consider it a treacherous movement.

They met the Blackfeet chief half-way, who extended his hand in friendship. Antoine grasped it. At the same time the Flathead levelled his piece and brought the Blackfoot to the ground. Antoine snatched off his scarlet blanket, which was richly ornamented, and galloped off with it as a trophy to the camp, the bullets of the enemy whistling after him. The Indians immediately threw themselves into the edge of a swamp, among willows and cotton-wood trees, interwoven with vines. Here they began to fortify themselves; the women digging a trench and throwing up a breast-work of logs and branches, deep hid in the bosom of the wood, while the warriors skirmished at the edge to keep the trappers at bay.

The latter took their station in a ravine in front, whence they kept up a scattering fire. In the meantime, an express had been sent off to the rendezvous for reinforcements. Captain Sublette and his associate, Campbell, were at their camp when the express came galloping across the plain, waving his cap, and giving the alarm: "Blackfeet! Blackfeet! a fight in the upper part of the valley!—to arms! to arms!"

The alarm was passed from camp to camp. It was a common cause. Every one turned out with horse and rifle. The Nez Percés and Flatheads joined. As fast as horsemen could arm and mount they galloped off; the valley was soon alive with white men and red men scouring at full speed.

When Captain Sublette arrived, he urged to penetrate the swamp and storm the fort, but all hung back in awe of the dismal horrors of the place and the danger of attacking such desperadoes in their savage den. The very Indian allies, though accustomed to bush-fighting, regarded it as almost impenetrable and full of frightful danger. Sublette was not to be turned from his purpose, but grasped his rifle and pushed into the thickets, followed by Campbell. Sinclair, excited by the gallant example of the two friends, pressed forward to share their dangers.

The swamp was all overgrown with woods and thickets, so closely matted and entangled that it was impossible to see ten paces ahead. The three associates in peril had to crawl along, one after another, making their way with caution, lest they should attract the eye of some lurking marksman. They took the lead by turns, until they had reached a more open part of the wood, and had glimpses of the rude fortress from between the trees. As Sinclair, who was in the advance, was putting some branches aside, he was shot through the body, and was conveyed out of the swamp by his men.

Sublette now took the advance. While he was reloading after shooting an Indian, a ball struck him in the shoulder, and almost wheeled him round. The next moment he was so faint that he could not stand, and he too was carried out of the thicket.

A brisk fire was now opened on the fort. Unluckily, the trappers and their allies had got scattered, so that Wyeth and a number of Nez Percés approached the fort on the north-west side, while others did the same on the opposite quarter. A cross-fire thus took place, which occasionally did mischief to friends as well as

foes. The Blackfeet, though completely overmatched, kept doggedly in their fort, making no offer of surrender. But during one of the pauses of the battle, the voice of the Blackfeet chief was heard.

“So long,” said he, “as we had powder and ball, we fought you in the open field: when those were spent, we retreated here to die with our women and children. You may burn us in our fort; but stay by our ashes and you who are so hungry for fighting will soon have enough. There are four hundred lodges of our brethren at hand. They will soon be here—their arms are strong—their hearts are big—they will avenge us!”

By the time this speech was rendered into English, the chief was made to say that four hundred lodges of his tribe were attacking the encampment at the other end of the valley. Every one now was for hurrying to the defence of the rendezvous. A party was left to keep watch upon the fort; the rest galloped off to the camp. By morning, their companions returned from the rendezvous, with the report that all was safe. As the day opened, they ventured within the swamp and approached the fort. All was silent. They advanced up to it without opposition. They entered: it had been abandoned in the night, and the Blackfeet had effected their retreat, carrying off their wounded on litters. They had lost twenty-six warriors in this battle. Thirty-two horses were likewise found killed; among them were some of those recently carried off from Sublette's party in the night. Five white men and one half-breed were killed, and several wounded. Seven of the Nez Percés were also killed and six wounded.

A striking circumstance is related as having occurred

the morning after the battle. As some of the trappers and their Indian allies were approaching the fort through the woods, they beheld an Indian woman, of noble form and features, leaning against a tree. Their surprise at her lingering here alone, to fall into the hands of her enemies, was dispelled when they saw the corpse of a warrior at her feet. Either she was so lost in grief as not to perceive their approach, or a proud spirit kept her silent and motionless. The Indians set up a yell on discovering her, and before the trappers could interfere, her mangled body fell upon the corpse which she had refused to abandon.

After the battle, the brigade of Milton Sublette, together with the free trappers and Wyeth's New England band, remained some days at the rendezvous, to see if the main body of Blackfeet intended to make an attack; nothing of the kind occurring, they proceeded on their route towards the south-west.

Captain Sublette, having distributed his supplies, had intended to set off on his return to St. Louis, taking with him the peltries collected from the trappers and Indians. His wound, however, obliged him to postpone his departure. Several who were to have accompanied him, impatient of the delay, determined to make their own way back through the mountains. It was on the very next day after they set out that this party of seven was descending a hill in Jackson's Hole near the Three Tetons when they were attacked by a band of Blackfeet. Of the seven companions Mr. More of Boston and Mr. Foy of Mississippi were killed, and Mr. Stephens was wounded. He and the rest, including two grandsons of Daniel Boone, returned to the camp at the rendezvous, Stephens dying five days later. Captain Sublette was soon able to travel, and, leading

his company by another route out of the way of the Blackfeet, he brought them and their valuable cargo safely within the frontier.

Another direct result of the battle of Pierre's Hole was the unsettled account between the Blackfeet and Antoine Godin, who had directly caused the fight there. It happened some two years later that a party of Indians of this race with a half-breed leader named Bird halted by the Snake River opposite a fur-trading post which for the time was Godin's headquarters. In response to an invitation from Bird, Godin without suspicion crossed the stream to buy the furs of the party, but was shot from behind while he sat smoking with the leaders, his scalp being ripped off before he was dead. This was the end of the battle of Pierre's Hole.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE NEZ PERCÉS

THE Blackfeet warriors, when they effected their midnight retreat from their wild fastness in Pierre's Hole, fell back into the valley of the Green River, where they joined the main body of their band. The whole force amounted to several hundred fighting men, gloomy and exasperated by their late disaster. They had with them their wives and children, which incapacitated them for any bold and extensive enterprise of a warlike nature; but when, in the course of their wanderings, they came in sight of the encampment of Fontenelle, who had moved some distance up Green River Valley in search of the free trappers, they put up tremendous war-cries and advanced fiercely as if to attack it. Second thoughts caused them to moderate their fury. They recollected the severe lesson just received, and could not but remark the strength of Fontenelle's position, which had been chosen with great judgment.

A formal talk ensued. The Blackfeet said nothing of the late battle, of which Fontenelle had as yet received no accounts; the latter, however, knew the hostile and perfidious nature of these savages, and took care to inform them of the encampment of Captain Bonneville, that they might know there were more white men in the neighbourhood. They passed some

little time at the camp; saw, no doubt, that such an enemy was not to be easily surprised; and then departed, to report all they had seen to their comrades.

Meantime the two scouts which Captain Bonneville had sent out to seek for the band of free trappers expected by Fontenelle, and to invite them to his camp, had been successful in their search, and on the 12th of August those worthies made their appearance.

Captain Bonneville, who was delighted with the game look of these cavaliers of the mountains, welcomed them heartily to his camp, and ordered a free allowance of grog to regale them, which soon put them in the most braggart spirits. They pronounced the Captain the finest fellow in the world, and his men all jovial lads, and swore they would pass the day with them. They did so; and a day it was, of boast, swagger, and rodomontade. The prime bullies and braves among the free trappers had each his circle of novices from among the Captain's band; mere green-horns, men unused to Indian life. These he would astonish and delight by the hour with prodigious tales of his doings among the Indians; and of the wonders he had seen, and the wonders he had performed among the mountains.

In the evening the free trappers drew off; for they come and go when and where they please; provide their own horses, arms, and other equipments; trap and trade on their own account, and dispose of their skins and peltries to the highest bidder; though sometimes, in a dangerous hunting-ground, they attach themselves to the camp of some trader for protection, where they come under such restrictions as may be necessary for the common safety. In the present instance they were delighted with their new acquaint-

ances, promising to return the following day. Day after day their visits were repeated; treat after treat succeeded, until all was confusion and uproar. The free trappers were no longer suffered to have all the swagger to themselves. The camp bullies and prime trappers of the party began to ruffle up, and to brag, in turn, of their perils and achievements. Each now tried to out-boast and out-talk the other; a quarrel ensued as a matter of course, and a general fight, according to frontier usage. The two factions drew out their forces for a pitched battle. They fell to work and belaboured each other with might and main; kicks and cuffs and dry blows were as well bestowed as they were well merited, until, having fought to their hearts' content, and been drubbed into a familiar acquaintance with each other's prowess and good qualities, they ended the fight by becoming firm friends.

Captain Bonneville, learning from his free trapper friends that the upper part of the Salmon River was a much better wintering ground than his present post on the Green, now made his arrangements for the autumn and the winter. The nature of the country through which he was about to travel rendered it impossible to proceed with waggons. He had more goods and supplies of various kinds, also, than were required for present purposes, or than could be conveniently transported on horseback; aided, therefore, by a few confidential men, he made caches when all the rest of the camp were asleep, and in these deposited the superfluous effects, together with the waggons.

Many of the horses were still so weak and lame as to be unfit for a long scramble through the mountains. These were collected into one cavalcade, and given in charge to an experienced trapper of the name of

Matthieu, who was to proceed westward, with a brigade of trappers, to Bear River, and later rejoin the main body at the proposed winter quarters on the Salmon River.

Captain Bonneville now broke up his camp (August 22d) and, soon passing beyond the sources of the Green, he pursued a difficult course through the mountains. At length, on the 19th of September, he reached the upper waters of Salmon River, and on the next morning, resuming his march at an early hour, he had not gone far when the hunters, who were beating up the country in the advance, came galloping back, making signals to encamp, and crying, "Indians! Indians!"

Captain Bonneville immediately struck into a skirt of wood and prepared for action, for the savages were already in sight trooping over the hills in great numbers. One of them left the main body and came forward singly, making signals of peace. He announced them as a band of Nez Percés (pronounced by the trappers *Nepercy*), friendly to the whites, whereupon an invitation was returned by Captain Bonneville for them to come and encamp with him. Having arranged themselves in martial style, the chiefs leading, the braves following in a long line, painted and decorated, and topped off with fluttering plumes, they advanced, shouting and singing, firing off their fuses, and clashing their shields.

The Nez Percés were on a hunting expedition, having no provisions left but a few dried salmon; yet finding the white men equally in want, they generously offered to share even this meagre pittance, and frequently repeated the offer, with an earnestness that left no doubt of their sincerity. For the two days that the parties remained in company, the most amicable intercourse

prevailed, and they parted the best of friends. Captain Bonneville detached a few men, under Mr. Cerré, an able leader, to accompany the Nez Percés on their hunting expedition, and to trade with them for meat for the winter's supply. After this, he proceeded down the river to establish his winter quarters, coming to a halt for that purpose on the 26th of September, five miles below the mouth of the Lemhi.

All hands now set to work to prepare a winter cantonment. A temporary fortification was thrown up for the protection of the party; a secure and comfortable pen was made, into which the horses could be driven at night; and huts were built for the reception of the merchandise.

This done, Captain Bonneville made a distribution of his forces; twenty men were to remain with him in garrison to protect the property; the rest were organised into three brigades, and sent off in different directions, to subsist themselves by hunting the buffalo, until the snow should become too deep.

Indeed, it would have been impossible to provide for the whole party in this neighbourhood. It was at the extreme western limit of the buffalo range, and these animals had recently been completely hunted out of the neighbourhood by the Nez Percés, so that, although the hunters of the garrison were continually on the alert, ranging the country round, they brought in scarce game sufficient to keep famine from the door.

The necessities of the camp at length became so urgent that Captain Bonneville determined to despatch a party to the Horse Prairie, a plain to the north of his cantonment, to procure a supply of provisions. When the men were about to depart, he proposed to the Nez Percés that some of them should join the hunting

party. To his surprise, they promptly declined, for it was a sacred day with them, and the Great Spirit would be angry should they devote it to hunting. They offered, however, to accompany the party if it would wait until the following day; but this the pinching demands of hunger would not permit, and the detachment proceeded.

A few days afterwards, four of them signified to Captain Bonneville that they were about to hunt. "What!" exclaimed he, "without guns or arrows; and with only one old spear? What do you expect to kill?" They smiled among themselves, but made no answer. Preparatory to the chase, they performed some religious rites, and offered up to the Great Spirit a few short prayers for safety and success; then, having received the blessings of their wives, they leaped upon their horses and departed, leaving the whole party of Christian spectators amazed and rebuked by this lesson of faith and dependence on a supreme and benevolent Being. "Accustomed," adds Captain Bonneville, "as I had heretofore been to find the wretched Indian revelling in blood, and stained by every vice which can degrade human nature, I could scarcely realise the scene which I had witnessed."

When, in the course of four or five days, they returned, laden with meat, Captain Bonneville was curious to know how they had attained such success with such scanty means. They gave him to understand that they had chased the herds of buffalo at full speed, until they tired them down, when they easily despatched them with the spear, and made use of the same weapon to flay the carcasses. The poor savages were as charitable as they had been pious, and generously shared with the party the spoils of their hunting; giving them food enough to last for several days.

A further and more intimate intercourse with this tribe gave Captain Bonneville still greater cause to admire their strong devotional feeling. "Simply to call these people religious," says he, "would convey but a faint idea of the deep hue of piety and devotion which pervades their whole conduct. Their honesty is immaculate, and their purity of purpose and their observance of the rites of their religion are most uniform and remarkable. They are, certainly, more like a nation of saints than a horde of savages."

For the greater part of the month of November Captain Bonneville remained in his temporary post on Salmon River. He was now in the full enjoyment of his wishes; leading a hunter's life in the heart of the wilderness, with all its wild populace around him. Beside his own people, motley in character and costume,—creole, Kentuckian, Indian, half-breed, hired trapper, and free trapper,—he was surrounded by encampments of Nez Percés and Flatheads, with their droves of horses covering the hills and plains. It was, he declared, a wild and bustling scene. The hunting parties of white men and red men, continually sallying forth and returning; the groups at the various encampments, some cooking, some working, some amusing themselves at different games; the neighing of horses, the braying of asses, the resounding strokes of the axe, the sharp report of the rifle, the whoop, the halloo, and the frequent burst of laughter in the midst of a region suddenly roused from perfect silence and loneliness by this transient hunter's sojourn, all these circumstances realised, he said, the idea of a "populous solitude."

A familiar intercourse of some standing with the Pierced-nose and Flathead Indians had now convinced

Captain Bonneville of their amicable and inoffensive character; he began to take a strong interest in them, and conceived the idea of becoming a pacificator, and healing the deadly feud between them and the Blackfeet, in which they were so deplorably the sufferers. He proposed the matter to some of the leaders, and urged that they should meet the Blackfeet chiefs in a grand pacific conference, offering to send two of his men to the enemy's camp with pipe, tobacco, and flag of truce, to negotiate the proposed meeting.

The Nez Percés and Flathead sages, upon this, held a council of war of two days' duration, in which there was abundance of hard smoking and long talking, and both eloquence and tobacco were nearly exhausted. At length they came to a decision to reject the worthy Captain's proposition, and upon pretty substantial grounds, as the reader may judge.

"War," said the chiefs, "is a bloody business, and full of evil; but it keeps the eyes of the chiefs always open, and makes the limbs of the young men strong and supple. In war, every one is on the alert. If we see a trail, we know it must be an enemy; if the Blackfeet come to us, we know it is for war, and we are ready. Peace, on the other hand, sounds no alarm; the eyes of the chiefs are closed in sleep, and the young men are sleek and lazy. The horses stray into the mountains; the women and their little babes go about alone. But the heart of a Blackfoot is a lie and his tongue is a trap. If he says peace, it is to deceive: he comes to us as a brother; he smokes his pipe with us; but when he sees us weak, and off our guard, he will slay and steal. We will have no such peace; let there be war!"

With this reasoning, Captain Bonneville was fain to



acquiesce; but, since the sagacious Flatheads and their allies were content to remain in a state of warfare, he wished them, at least, to exercise the boasted vigilance which war was to produce, and to keep their eyes open. All these counsels were lost upon his easy and simple-minded hearers. A careless indifference reigned throughout their encampments, and their horses were permitted to range the hills at night in perfect freedom. In a single night a sweep was made through the neighbouring pastures by the Blackfeet and eighty-six of the finest horses carried off. A whip and a rope were left in a conspicuous situation by the robbers, as a taunt to the simpletons they had unhorsed.

Long before sunrise, the news of this calamity spread like wildfire through the different encampments. Captain Bonneville, whose own horses remained safe at their pickets, watched in momentary expectation of an outbreak of warriors, Pierced-nose and Flathead, in furious pursuit of the marauders; but no such thing—they contented themselves with searching diligently over hill and dale, to glean up such horses as had escaped the hands of the marauders, and then resigned themselves to their loss with the most exemplary quiescence.

If the meekness and long-suffering of the Pierced-noses grieved the spirit of Captain Bonneville, there was another individual in the camp to whom they were still more annoying. This was a Blackfeet renegado, named Kosato, a fiery, hot-blooded youth, who, with a beautiful girl of the same tribe, had taken refuge among the Nez Percés. Though adopted into the tribe, he still retained the warlike spirit of his race, and loathed the peaceful, inoffensive habits of those around him.

The character and conduct of this man attracted the attention of Captain Bonneville, and he was anxious to hear the reason why he had deserted his tribe, and why he looked back upon them with such deadly hostility. Kosato told him his own story briefly;—it gives a picture of the deep, strong passions that work in the bosoms of these miscalled stoics.

"You see my wife," said he: "she is good; she is beautiful—I love her. Yet she has been the cause of all my troubles. She was the wife of my chief. I loved her more than he did; and she knew it. We talked together; we laughed together; we were always seeking each other's society; but we were as innocent as children. The chief grew jealous and commanded her to speak with me no more. His heart became hard towards her; his jealousy grew more furious. He beat her without cause and without mercy; and threatened to kill her outright, if she even looked at me. Do you want traces of his fury? Look at that scar! His rage against me was no less persecuting. War parties of the Crows were hovering round us; our young men had seen their trail. All hearts were roused for action; my horses were before my lodge. Suddenly the chief came, took them to his own pickets, and called them his own. What could I do?—he was a chief. I durst not speak, but my heart was burning. I joined no longer in the council, the hunt, or the war-feast. What had I to do there? an unhorsed, degraded warrior. I kept by myself, and thought of nothing but these wrongs and outrages.

"I was sitting one evening upon a knoll that overlooked the meadow where the horses were pastured. I saw the horses that were once mine grazing among those of the chief. This maddened me, and I sat

brooding for a time over the injuries I had suffered and the cruelties which she I loved had endured for my sake, until my heart swelled and grew sore and my teeth were clinched. As I looked down upon the meadow, I saw the chief walking among his horses. I fastened my eyes on him as a hawk's; my blood boiled; I drew my breath hard. He went among the willows. In an instant I was on my feet; my hand was on my knife—I flew rather than ran; before he was aware, I sprang upon him, and with two blows laid him dead at my feet. I covered his body with earth and strewed bushes over the place; then hastened to her I loved, told her what I had done, and urged her to fly with me. She only answered me with tears. I reminded her of the wrongs I had suffered and of the blows and stripes she had endured from the deceased; I had done nothing but an act of justice. I again urged her to fly; but she only wept the more and bade me go. My heart was heavy, but my eyes were dry. I folded my arms. ‘’T is well,’ said I, ‘Kosato will go alone to the desert. None will be with him but the wild beasts of the desert. The seekers of blood may follow on his trail. They may come upon him when he sleeps, and glut their revenge; but you will be safe. Kosato will go alone.’

“I turned away. She sprang after me, and strained me in her arms. ‘No,’ cried she, ‘Kosato shall not go alone! Wherever he goes I will go—he shall never part from me.’

“We hastily took in our hands such things as we most needed, and stealing quietly from the village, mounted the first horses we encountered. Speeding day and night, we soon reached this tribe. They received us with welcome, and we have dwelt with them

in peace. They are good and kind; they are honest; but their hearts are the hearts of women."

Such was the story of Kosato. It is of a kind that often occurs in Indian life, where love elopements from tribe to tribe are frequent.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE RENDEZVOUS OF 1833

ON the 19th of December Captain Bonneville and his confederate Indians raised their camp and entered the narrow gorge made by the north fork of Salmon River, for up this lay the secure and plenteous hunting region so temptingly described by the Indians. Here, then, there was a cessation from toil, from hunger, and alarm. Past ills and dangers were forgotten. The hunt, the game, the song, the story, the rough though good-humoured joke, made time pass joyously away, and plenty and security reigned throughout the camp, giving a seasonable flavour to the Christmas time.

The festivities, however, were scarcely over when Captain Bonneville determined to start in person in search of Matthieu, whose failure to reach the camp before winter set in had caused great uneasiness for his safety. Accordingly, on the 26th of December, he left the camp, accompanied by thirteen stark trappers and hunters, all well mounted and armed for dangerous enterprise. On the following morning they passed out at the head of the mountain gorge and sallied forth into the open plain. As they confidently expected a brush with the Blackfeet, or some other predatory horde, they moved with great circumspection, and kept vigilant watch in their encampments.

In the course of another day they left the main

branch of Salmon River, and proceeded south towards a pass called John Day's Defile. It was severe and arduous travelling. The plains were swept by keen and bitter blasts of wintry wind; the ground was generally covered with snow, game was scarce, so that hunger generally prevailed in the camp, while the want of pasturage soon began to manifest itself in the declining vigour of the horses.

The party had scarcely encamped on the afternoon of the 28th, when two of the hunters who had sallied forth in quest of game came galloping back in great alarm. While hunting they had perceived a party of savages, evidently manœuvring to cut them off from the camp; and nothing had saved them from being entrapped but the speed of their horses.

Captain Bonneville then ordered the horses to be driven in and picketed, and threw up a rough breast-work of fallen trunks of trees, and the vegetable rubbish of the wilderness. Within this barrier was maintained a vigilant watch throughout the night, which passed away without alarm. At early dawn they scrutinised the surrounding plain, to discover whether any enemies had been lurking about during the night; not a footprint, however, was to be discovered in the coarse gravel with which the plain was covered.

After a few days of such uncertainty, hunger began to cause them more fear than a neighbouring enemy. With Captain Bonneville, however, perseverance was a matter of pride. Onward, therefore, the little band urged their way through difficulties and dangers that were at times appalling. Finally they found (January 13, 1833) an encampment of Bannock Indians near the Snake River, and in it two of Matthieu's men, who

were there expecting the main party, which arrived somewhat later.

Captain Bonneville remained on Snake River nearly three weeks after the arrival of Matthieu and his party. At length, his horses having recovered strength sufficient for a journey, he set out to visit his caches on Salmon River. These he found perfectly secure, and, having secretly opened them, he selected such articles as were necessary to equip the free trappers, and to supply the inconsiderable trade with the Indians, after which he closed them again. The free trappers, being newly rigged out and supplied, were in high spirits, and swaggered gaily about the camp. To compensate all hands for past sufferings, and to give a cheerful spur to further operations, Captain Bonneville now gave the men what, in frontier phrase, is termed "a regular blow-out." It was a day of uncouth gambols and frolics, and rude feasting. The Indians joined in the sports and games, and all was mirth and good fellowship.

It was now the middle of March, and Captain Bonneville made preparations to open the spring campaign. For his main trapping ground for the season he had pitched upon the Malade River, a stream which rises nearly south from the sources of the Salmon and flows south-west into the Snake. Previous to his departure, the Captain despatched Mr. Cerré with a few men, to visit the Indian villages and purchase horses; he furnished his clerk, Mr. Hodgkiss, also with a small stock of goods, to keep up a trade with the Indians during the spring, for such peltries as they might collect, appointing the caches on Salmon River as the point of rendezvous, where they were to rejoin him on the 15th of June following.

This done, he set out for Malade River with a band of twenty-eight men, composed of hired and free trappers, and Indian hunters, together with eight squaws. About the beginning of April, they encamped upon Godin's River, where they found the swamp full of "muskrat houses." Here, therefore, Captain Bonneville determined to remain a few days, and that his maiden campaign might open with spirit, he promised the Indians and free trappers an extra price for every muskrat they should take. The abundance of muskrats in the swamp was but an earnest of the nobler game they were to find when they should reach the Malade River, where they might trap at their leisure without molestation.

In the midst of their gayety, a hunter came galloping into the camp, yelling, "A trail! a trail!—lodge poles! lodge poles!" The gayety of the camp was at an end. Their worst fears were soon confirmed, for the scouts found the party to be composed of twenty-two prime trappers, all well appointed, with excellent horses in capital condition, led by Milton Sublette and an able coadjutor named Gervais, and in full march for the Malade hunting ground.

This was stunning news. The Malade River was the only trapping ground within reach; but to have to compete there with veteran trappers, perfectly at home among the mountains and admirably mounted, while they were so poorly provided with horses and trappers, and had but one man in their party acquainted with the country—it was out of the question!

The rival parties now encamped together, not out of companionship, but to keep an eye upon each other. Day after day passed by, without any possibility of getting to the Malade country. Sublette and Gervais



endeavoured to force their way across the mountain; but the snows lay so deep as to oblige them to turn back. In the meantime, the Captain's horses were daily gaining strength, and their hoofs improving, which had been worn and battered by mountain service. The Captain, also, was increasing his stock of provisions, so that the delay was all in his favour.

We shall not follow the Captain throughout his trapping campaign, which lasted until the beginning of June; nor detail all the manœuvres of the rival trapping parties, and their various schemes to outwit and out-trap each other. Suffice it to say, that after having visited and camped about various streams with varying success, Captain Bonneville set forward early in June for the appointed rendezvous at the caches. On the way, he treated his party to a grand buffalo hunt. The scouts had reported numerous herds in a plain beyond an intervening height. There was an immediate halt; the fleetest horses were forthwith mounted, and the party advanced to the summit of the hill. Hence they beheld the great plain below absolutely swarming with buffalo.

Twenty-two horsemen descended cautiously into the plain, conformably to the directions that had been given them. "It was a beautiful sight," said the Captain, "to see the runners advancing in column, at a slow trot, until within two hundred and fifty yards of the outskirts of the herd, then dashing on at full speed, until lost in the immense multitude of buffaloes scouring the plain in every direction." In the meantime, Captain Bonneville and the residue of the party moved on to the appointed camping ground; thither the most expert runners succeeded in driving numbers of buffalo, which were killed hard by the camp, and the flesh

transported thither without difficulty. In a little while the whole camp looked like one great slaughter-house; the carcasses were skilfully cut up, great fires were made, scaffolds erected for drying and jerking beef, and an ample provision was made for future subsistence. On the 15th of June Captain Bonneville and his party arrived safely at the caches, where he was joined by the other detachments of his main party, all in good health and spirits. The caches were again opened, supplies of various kinds taken out, and they celebrated with proper conviviality this merry meeting.

Soon after this rendezvous, while he was on the Snake River plain, Captain Bonneville made one of his first essays at the strategy of the fur trade. There was at this time an assemblage of Nez Percés, Flatheads, and Cottonois Indians, encamped together upon the plain, well provided with beaver, which they had collected during the spring. These they were waiting to traffic with a resident trader of the Hudson Bay Company, who was stationed among them, and with whom they were accustomed to deal. As it happened, the trader was almost entirely destitute of Indian goods, his spring supply not having yet reached him. Captain Bonneville had secret intelligence that supplies were on their way, and would soon arrive; he hoped, however, by a prompt move, to anticipate their arrival, and secure the market to himself. Throwing himself, therefore, among the Indians, he opened his packs of merchandise, and displayed the most tempting wares: bright cloths and scarlet blankets, and glittering ornaments, and everything gay and glorious in the eyes of warrior or squaw—all, however, in vain. The Hudson Bay trader was a perfect master of his business,

thoroughly acquainted with the Indians he had to deal with, and held such control over them that none dared to act openly in opposition to his wishes: nay more—he came nigh turning the tables upon the Captain, and shaking the allegiance of some of his free trappers, by distributing liquors among them. The latter, therefore, was glad to give up a competition, where the war was likely to be carried into his own camp.

In fact, the traders of the Hudson Bay Company had advantages over all competitors in the trade beyond the Rocky Mountains. That huge monopoly centred within itself not merely its own hereditary and long-established power and influence, but also those of its ancient rival, but now integral part, the famous Northwest Company. It had thus its races of traders, trappers, hunters, and *voyageurs*, born and brought up in its service, and inheriting from preceding generations a knowledge and aptitude in everything connected with Indian life and Indian traffic. In the process of years, this company had been enabled to spread its ramifications in every direction; its system of intercourse was founded upon a long and intimate knowledge of the character and necessities of the various tribes, and of all the fastnesses, defiles, and favourable hunting grounds of the country. Their capital, also, and the manner in which their supplies were distributed at various posts, or forwarded by regular caravans, kept their traders well supplied, and enabled them to furnish their goods to the Indians at a cheap rate. Their men, too, being chiefly drawn from the Canadas, where they enjoyed great influence and control, were engaged at the most trifling wages, and supported at little cost; the provisions which they took with them being little more than Indian corn and

grease. They were brought, also, into the most perfect discipline and subordination, especially when their leaders had once got them to their scene of action in the heart of the wilderness.

These circumstances combined to give the leaders of the Hudson Bay Company a decided advantage over all the American companies that came within their range; so that any close competition with them was almost hopeless.

Shortly after Captain Bonneville's ineffectual attempt to participate in the trade of the associated camp, the supplies of the Hudson Bay Company arrived; and the resident trader was enabled to monopolise the market.

The Green River Valley was again in the summer of 1833 the scene of one of those general gatherings of traders, trappers, and Indians that we have already mentioned. The three rival companies, which for a year past had been endeavouring to out-trade, out-trap, and outwit each other, were here encamped in close proximity, awaiting their annual supplies. About four miles from the rendezvous of Captain Bonneville was that of the American Fur Company, hard by which was that also of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

After the eager rivalry and almost hostility displayed by these companies in their late campaigns, it might be expected that, when thus brought in juxtaposition, they would hold themselves warily and sternly aloof from each other, and, should they happen to come in contact, brawl and bloodshed would ensue.

At the present season, however, all parties were in good humour. The year had been productive. Competition, by threatening to lessen their profits, had quickened their wits; so that, on assembling at their



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respective places of rendezvous, each company found itself in possession of a rich stock of peltries.

The leaders of the different companies, therefore, mingled on terms of perfect good fellowship; interchanging visits, and regaling each other in the best style their respective camps afforded. But the rich treat for the worthy Captain was to see the "chivalry" of the various encampments engaged in contests of skill at running, jumping, wrestling, shooting with the rifle, and running horses. And then their rough hunters' feastings and carousals. They drank together, they sang, they laughed, they whooped; they tried to outbrag and outlie each other in stories of their adventures and achievements. Here the free trappers were in all their glory; they considered themselves the "cocks of the walk," and always carried the highest crests.

The presence of the Shoshonie tribe contributed occasionally to cause temporary jealousies and feuds. The Shoshonie beauties became objects of rivalry among some of the amorous mountaineers. Happy was the trapper who could muster up a red blanket, a string of gay beads, or a paper of precious vermilion, with which to win the smiles of a Shoshonie fair one.

The caravans of supplies arrived at the valley just at this period of gallantry and good-fellowship. Then commenced a scene of eager competition and wild prodigality at the different encampments. A mania for purchasing spread itself throughout the several bands; munitions for war, for hunting, for gallantry, were seized upon with equal avidity,—rifles, hunting knives, traps, scarlet cloth, red blankets, garish beads, and glittering trinkets were bought at any price, and scores run up without any thought how they were ever

to be rubbed off. Every freak of prodigality was indulged to its full extent, and in a little while most of the trappers, having squandered away all their wages, and perhaps run knee-deep in debt, were ready for another hard campaign in the wilderness.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CROW COUNTRY

CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE now found himself at the head of a hardy company of trappers, all benefited by at least one year's experience among the mountains. He had, also, an excellent troop of horses in prime condition, and determined, therefore, to strike out into some of the bolder parts of his scheme. One of these was to carry his expeditions into some of the unknown tracts of the Far West, beyond what is generally termed the buffalo range. Another favourite project was to establish a trading-post on the lower part of the Columbia River, near the Willamette Valley, and to endeavour to retrieve for his country some of the lost trade of Astoria.

The first of the above-mentioned views was, at present, uppermost in his mind — the exploring of unknown regions. So important an undertaking he confided to his lieutenant, Mr. Walker, in whose experience and ability he had great confidence. He instructed him to keep along the shores of the Great Salt Lake, of which next to nothing was known, and trap in all the streams on his route; also to keep a journal, and minutely to record the events of his journey, and everything curious or interesting, making maps or charts of his route, and of the surrounding country.

No pains nor expense were spared in fitting out the party of forty men which he was to command. They had complete supplies for a year, and were to meet Captain Bonneville, in the ensuing summer, in the valley of Bear River, the largest tributary of the Salt Lake.

As soon as Captain Bonneville had sent Mr. Walker and his party on the journey that proved so long and eventful, he began to arrange for the transportation of his accumulating peltries to New York. Mr. Robert Campbell, the partner of Sublette, was at the time in the rendezvous of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, having brought up their supplies. As he was about to set off for St. Louis with that company's furs, Captain Bonneville decided to forward his own by the same route under the especial care of Mr. Cerré. Accordingly he broke camp on the 25th of July in order to escort Cerré in safety through the Crow country to the point of embarkation on the Big Horn River, his way lying thence down the Yellowstone and the Missouri to St. Louis.

But first let us give the account of the Crow country, as rendered by Arapooish, a Crow chief, to Mr. Robert Campbell, of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

"The Crow country," said he, "is a good country. The Great Spirit has put it exactly in the right place; while you are in it you fare well; whenever you go out of it, whichever way you travel, you fare worse.

"If you go to the south, you have to wander over great barren plains: the water is warm and bad, and you meet the fever and ague.

"To the north it is cold; the winters are long and bitter, with no grass; you cannot keep horses there, but must travel with dogs. What is a country without horses?

"On the Columbia they are poor and dirty, paddle about in canoes, and eat fish. Their teeth are worn out; they are always taking fish-bones out of their mouths. Fish is poor food.

"To the east, they dwell in villages; they live well; but they drink the muddy water of the Missouri—that is bad. A Crow's dog would not drink such water.

"About the forks of the Missouri is a fine country; good water; good grass; plenty of buffalo. In summer, it is almost as good as the Crow country; but in winter it is cold; the grass is gone; and there is no salt weed for the horses.

"The Crow country is exactly in the right place. It has snowy mountains and sunny plains; all kinds of climates and good things for every season. When the summer heats scorch the prairies, you can draw up under the mountains, where the air is sweet and cool, the grass fresh, and the bright streams come tumbling out of the snow-banks. There you can hunt the elk, the deer, and the antelope, when their skins are fit for dressing; there you will find plenty of white bears and mountain sheep.

"In the autumn, when your horses are fat and strong from the mountain pastures, you can go down into the plains and hunt the buffalo, or trap beaver on the streams. And when winter comes on you can take shelter in the woody bottoms along the rivers; there you will find buffalo meat for yourselves, and cottonwood bark for your horses: or you may winter in the Wind River Valley, where there is salt weed in abundance.

"The Crow country is exactly in the right place. Everything good is to be found there. There is no country like the Crow country."

Such was the eulogium on his country by Arapooish.

Mr. Robert Campbell, from whom we have this account, in the course of one of his trapping expeditions was quartered in the village of Arapooish, and was a guest in the lodge of the chieftain. He had collected a large quantity of furs, and, fearful of being plundered, deposited but a part in the lodge of the chief; the rest he buried in a cache. One night, Arapooish came into the lodge with a cloudy brow, and seated himself for a time without saying a word. At length, turning to Campbell, "You have more furs with you," said he, "than you have brought into my lodge?"

"I have," replied Campbell.

"Where are they?"

Campbell knew the uselessness of any prevarication with an Indian; and the importance of complete frankness. He described the exact place where he had concealed his peltries.

"'T is well," replied Arapooish; "you speak straight. It is just as you say. But your cache has been robbed. Go and see how many skins have been taken from it."

Campbell examined the cache, and estimated his loss to be about one hundred and fifty beaver skins.

Arapooish now summoned a meeting of the village. He bitterly reproached his people for robbing a stranger who had confided to their honour; and commanded that whoever had taken the skins should bring them back; declaring that, as Campbell was his guest and inmate of his lodge, he would not eat nor drink until every skin was restored to him.

The meeting broke up, and every one dispersed. Arapooish now charged Campbell to give neither reward nor thanks to any one who should bring in

the beaver skins, but to keep count as they were delivered.

In a little while the skins began to make their appearance, a few at a time; they were laid down in the lodge, and those who brought them departed without saying a word. The day passed away. Arapooish sat in one corner of his lodge, wrapped up in his robe, scarcely moving a muscle of his countenance. When night arrived, he demanded if all the skins had been brought in. Above a hundred had been given up, and Campbell expressed himself contented. Not so the Crow chieftain. He fasted all that night, nor tasted a drop of water. In the morning, some more skins were brought in, and continued to come, one and two at a time, throughout the day; until but a few were wanting to make the number complete. Campbell was now anxious to put an end to this fasting of the old chief, and again declared that he was perfectly satisfied. Arapooish demanded what number of skins were yet wanting. On being told, he whispered to some of his people, who disappeared. After a time the number were brought in, though it was evident they were not any of the skins that had been stolen, but others gleaned in the village.

"Is all right now?" demanded Arapooish.

"All is right," replied Campbell.

"Good! Now bring me meat and drink!"

When they were alone together, Arapooish had a conversation with his guest.

"When you come another time among the Crows," said he, "don't hide your goods: trust to them and they will not wrong you. Put your goods in the lodge of a chief, and they are sacred; hide them in a cache, and any one who finds will steal them. My

people have now given up your goods for my sake; but there are some foolish young men in the village who may be disposed to be troublesome. Don't linger, therefore, but pack your horses and be off."

Campbell took his advice, and made his way safely out of the Crow country. He has ever since maintained that the Crows are not so black as they are painted. "Trust to their honour," says he, "and you are safe: trust to their honesty, and they will steal the hair off of your head."

Arapoosh has an interest for the reader of this narrative from the fact that he became chief of the Crows when they were deserted by Rose, that designing vagabond who acted as guide and interpreter to Mr. Hunt and his party on their journey across the mountains to Astoria. Rose, it will be remembered, staid among the Crows, marrying one of their women, and adopting their congenial habits.

Having distinguished himself in repeated actions against the Blackfeet, Rose, on one occasion, led a storming party against a strong breastwork of the enemy. The first Blackfoot that opposed him he shot down with his rifle, and, snatching up the war-club of his victim, he killed four others within the fort. The victory was complete, and Rose returned to the Crow village covered with glory and distinguished by the name of Che-ku-kaats, or "the man who killed five." He became chief of the band, and for a time he was the popular idol; but having soon awakened the envy of the native braves, and tiring of the feuds that grew out of their hostility, he left his adopted brethren, and in 1823 went down the Missouri.

It was in this year that Rose, as interpreter, served General Ashley faithfully, and warned that gentleman

of the impending attack by the Aricaras. He also proved very valuable in the same capacity to Colonel Leavenworth, who so promptly followed up the defeat of Ashley with an expedition against the offending Aricaras.

When General Atkinson made his military expedition up the Missouri, in 1825, to protect the fur trade, he held a conference with the Crow nation, at which Rose figured as Indian dignitary and Crow interpreter. While the general and the chiefs were smoking pipes and making speeches, the officers, supposing all was friendly, left the troops, and drew near the scene of ceremonial. Some of the more knowing Crows, perceiving this, stole quietly to the camp, and, unobserved, contrived to stop the touch-holes of the field-pieces with dirt. Shortly after, a misunderstanding occurred in the conference: some of the Indians, knowing the cannon to be useless, became insolent. A tumult arose. In the confusion, Colonel O'Fallon snapped a pistol in the face of a brave, and knocked him down with the butt end. The Crows were all in a fury. A chance-medley fight was on the point of taking place, when Rose, his natural sympathies as a white man suddenly recurring, broke the stock of his fusée over the head of a Crow warrior, and laid so vigorously about him with the barrel, that he soon put the whole throng to flight. Luckily, as no lives had been lost, this sturdy rib roasting calmed the fury of the Crows, and the tumult ended without serious consequences.

Of the later life of Rose nothing is known, nor the manner of his death. His grave is still pointed out on the bank of the Missouri nearly opposite the mouth of the Milk River. His career among the Crow Indians had the effect of strengthening them as a nation against

the Blackfeet—their natural enemy—and it also showed them the advantage of allying themselves with the whites, toward whom they gradually inclined, though they seem never to have overcome their thievish propensities.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS

CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE proceeded around the south point of the Wind River Mountains, and reached the head of navigation on the Big Horn without other incident than a visit on the way to a "Tar Spring," the medicinal properties of which were highly praised by trappers. Here the men hastened to gather a quantity of what we now know as petroleum, but which was then a remedy of great rarity, forming the principal ingredient in the medicine then called British Oil, and also called Seneca Oil, from being found near Seneca Lake in the State of New York. The men used it for their bruises, sprains, and sore muscles, and for similar purposes in connection with their horses.

His route had been across the valley of the Green River, through the South Pass, and down the Popo Agie to the Big Horn. A few days before reaching that point, Captain Bonneville fell in with Campbell and his party, which consisted of his escort for the trip down the river, of his partners Fitzpatrick and Milton Sublette, and of Nathaniel J. Wyeth. All but Fitzpatrick were bound down the river; but in fear of him, Captain Bonneville detached secretly two trapping parties to preoccupy the valleys he had selected and to meet him later at Medicine Lodge Valley. In this apprehension, however, he was mistaken, for the moment

Campbell and his men had embarked with their precious freight, Fitzpatrick took charge of all the horses, numbering a hundred, and struck off to the east (instead of the west) to trap upon the Little Horn, Powder, and Tongue rivers. It may be added here that within a month he was robbed by the Crows of all his horses and stripped of all he had.

Meantime all hands had set to work to build "bull boats" for the trip to St. Louis. Wyeth was ready first; and, with his usual promptness and hardihood, launched his frail bark, singly, on this wild and hazardous voyage, taking with him Milton Sublette, his former fellow-traveller and his companion in the battle at Pierre's Hole. A detailed account of this trip has been preserved, and is given in a later chapter. Mr. Campbell took command of his own boats; and Mr. Cerré and a party of thirty-six men, of Captain Bonneville's, the combined forces making a truly formidable array as they set off down the bright current of the Big Horn.

Now that Fitzpatrick had set out in the direction opposite to his own intended course, Captain Bonneville was free to prosecute his trapping campaign without rivalry. Accordingly, on the 17th of August, he set out for the rendezvous at Medicine Lodge. He had but four men remaining with him, and forty-six horses to take care of. With these he had to make his way through a region full of peril for a numerous cavalcade so slightly manned. In fact, during the afternoon of his first day's march, he observed, to his disquiet, a cloud of smoke arising from the base of the Big Horn Mountains, and came upon a deserted Black-foot camp and fresh traces of these Indians. He, therefore, avoided this dangerous neighbourhood, pro-

ceeding with the utmost caution, for it was dangerous to light a fire or discharge a gun, where such quick-eared and quick-sighted enemies were at hand.

On the last day of the march, hunger got the better of their caution, and they shot a fine buffalo bull; but, without halting to make a meal, they carried the meat with them to the rendezvous, where they celebrated their safe arrival by a hearty supper. Next morning they erected a strong pen for the horses, and a fortress of logs for themselves, continuing to observe the greatest caution, even in regard to their cooking, which was all done at midday, when a fire makes no glare and a moderate smoke cannot be perceived at any great distance.

In this way the little party remained for several days, until, on 29th of August, the two detachments they had been expecting arrived together at the rendezvous. From the reports thus brought to him, Captain Bonneville was sure that he was in a region teeming with danger.

He broke up his encampment, therefore, on the 1st of September, and made his way to the south, across the Little Horn Mountain, until he reached Wind River, and then turning westward, moved slowly up the banks of that stream, giving time for his men to trap as he proceeded. As it was not in the plan of the present hunting campaign to go near the caches on Green River, and as the trappers were in want of traps to replace those they had lost, Captain Bonneville undertook to visit the caches, and procure a supply. To accompany him in this hazardous expedition, which would take him through the defiles of the Wind River Mountains, and up the Green River Valley, he took but three men; the main party were to continue on trapping

up towards the head of Wind River, near which he was to rejoin them, just about the place where that stream issues from the mountains.

Having forded Wind River a little above its mouth, Captain Bonneville and his three companions proceeded across a gravelly plain, until they fell upon the Popo Agie, up the left bank of which they held their course, nearly in a southerly direction. Here they came upon numerous droves of buffalo, and halted for the purpose of procuring a supply of beef. As the hunters were stealing cautiously to get within shot of the game, two small white bears suddenly presented themselves in their path, and, rising upon their hind legs, contemplated them for some time, with a whimsically solemn gaze. The hunters remained motionless; whereupon the bears, having apparently satisfied their curiosity, lowered themselves upon all fours, and began to withdraw. The hunters now advanced, upon which the bears turned, rose again upon their haunches, and repeated their serio-comic examination. This was repeated several times, until the hunters, piqued at their unmannerly staring, rebuked it with a discharge of their rifles. The bears made an awkward bound or two, as if wounded, and then walked off with great gravity, seeming to commune together, and every now and then turning to take another look at the hunters.

The hunters succeeded in killing a couple of fine cows, and, having secured the best of the meat, continued forward until some time after dark, when, encamping in a large thicket of willows, they made a great fire, roasted buffalo beef enough for half a score, disposed of the whole of it with keen relish and high glee, and then "turned in" for the night and slept soundly, like weary and well-fed hunters.

In the afternoon of the second day, the travellers attained one of the elevated valleys locked up in the Wind River Mountains through which they were trying to cross. Here were two bright and beautiful little lakes, set like mirrors in the midst of stern and rocky heights, and surrounded by grassy meadows, inexpressibly refreshing to the eye. They had now ascended to a great height above the level of the plains, yet they beheld huge crags of granite piled one upon another, and beetling like battlements far above them. While two of the men remained in the camp with the horses, Captain Bonneville, accompanied by the other man, reached the summit of a lofty cliff, but it was only to behold gigantic peaks rising all around. For a time, the Indian fable seemed realised: he had attained that height from which the Blackfoot warrior after death first catches a view of the land of souls, and beholds the happy hunting grounds spread out below him, brightening with the abodes of the free and generous spirits.

The view from the snowy peak of the Wind River Mountains, while it excited Captain Bonneville's enthusiasm, satisfied him that it would be useless to force a passage westward, through multiplying barriers of cliffs and precipices. Turning his face eastward, therefore, he endeavoured to descend, and to extricate himself from the heart of this rock-piled wilderness.

On the second day of their descent, the travellers, having got beyond the steepest pitch of the mountains, came to where the deep and rugged ravine began occasionally to expand into small levels or valleys. Here, not merely the river itself, but every rivulet flowing into it, was dammed up by communities of industrious beavers, so as to inundate the neighbourhood, and make continual swamps.

During a midday halt in one of these beaver valleys, Captain Bonneville left his companions, and strolled down the course of the stream to reconnoitre. He had not proceeded far, when he came to a beaver pond, and caught a glimpse of one of its painstaking inhabitants busily at work upon the dam. He moved forward with the utmost caution until, having attained a position commanding a view of the whole pond, he stretched himself flat on the ground, and watched the solitary workman. In a little while, three others appeared at the head of the dam, bringing sticks and bushes. With these they proceeded directly to the barrier, which Captain Bonneville perceived was in need of repair. Having deposited their loads upon the broken part, they dived into the water, and shortly reappeared at the surface. Each now brought a quantity of mud, with which he would plaster the sticks and bushes just deposited. This kind of masonry was continued for some time, repeated supplies of wood and mud being brought, and treated in the same manner. This done, the industrious beavers indulged in a little recreation, chasing each other about the pond, dodging and whisking about on the surface, or diving to the bottom; and in their frolic often slapping their tails on the water with a loud, clacking sound. While they were thus amusing themselves, another of the fraternity made his appearance, and looked gravely on their sports for some time, without offering to join in them. He then climbed the bank close to where the Captain was concealed, and, rearing himself on his hind quarters, in a sitting position, put his fore paws against a young pine-tree, and began to cut the bark with his teeth. At times he would tear off a small piece, and holding it between his paws, and retaining his sitting position, would feed

himself with it, after the fashion of a monkey. The object of the beaver, however, was evidently to cut down the tree; and he was proceeding with his work, when he was alarmed by the approach of Captain Bonneville's men, who, feeling anxious at the protracted absence of their leader, were coming in search of him. At the sound of their voices, all the beavers, busy as well as idle, dived at once beneath the surface, and were no more to be seen.

Great choice, according to the Captain, is certainly displayed by the beaver in selecting the wood which is to furnish bark for winter provision. The whole beaver household, old and young, set out upon this business, and will often make long journeys before they are suited. Sometimes they cut down trees of the largest size and then cull the branches, the bark of which is most to their taste. These they cut into lengths of about three feet, convey them to the water, and float them to their lodges, where they are stored away for winter. They are studious of cleanliness and comfort in their lodges, and after their repasts will carry out the sticks from which they have eaten the bark, and throw them into the current beyond the barrier. They are jealous, too, of their territories, and extremely pugnacious, never permitting a strange beaver to enter their premises, and often fighting with such virulence as almost to tear each other to pieces. In the spring, which is the breeding season, the male leaves the female at home, and sets off on a tour of pleasure, rambling often to a great distance. As summer advances, he gives up his bachelor rambles, and be-  
thinking himself of housekeeping duties, returns home to his new mate and his progeny, and marshals them all for the foraging expedition in quest of winter provisions.

Practice has given such quickness to the eye of the experienced trapper that he can detect the slightest sign of beaver, no matter how well concealed the lodge may be by close thickets and overhanging willows. He now goes to work to set his trap, planting it on the shore in some chosen place, two or three inches below the surface of the water, and secures it by a chain to a pole set deep in the mud. A small twig is then stripped of its bark, and one end is dipped in the "medicine," as the trappers term the peculiar bait which they employ. This end of the stick rises about four inches above the surface of the water, the other end is planted between the jaws of the trap. The beaver, possessing an acute sense of smell, is soon attracted by the odour of the bait. As he raises his nose towards it, his foot is caught in the trap. In his fright he throws a somerset into the deep water. The trap, being fastened to the pole, resists all his efforts to drag it to the shore; the chain by which it is fastened defies his teeth; he struggles for a time, and at length sinks to the bottom and is drowned.

Occasionally it happens that several members of a beaver family are trapped in succession. The survivors then become extremely shy, and can scarcely be "brought to medicine," to use the trapper's phrase for "taking the bait." In such case the trapper gives up the use of the bait, and conceals his traps in the usual paths and crossing-places of the household. The beaver, now being completely "up to trap," approaches them cautiously, and springs them ingeniously with a stick. At other times he turns the traps bottom upwards, by the same means, and occasionally even drags them to the barrier and conceals them in the mud. The trapper now gives up the contest of in-



genuity, and, shouldering his traps, marches off, admitting that he is not yet "up to beaver."

On the day following Captain Bonneville's supervision of the industrious and frolicsome community of beavers, he succeeded in extricating himself from the Wind River Mountains, and, regaining the plain to the eastward, made a great bend to the south, so as to go round the bases of the mountains, and arrived without further incident of importance at the old place of rendezvous in Green River Valley, on the 17th of September.

A week later they were back again with the main body; and both had many adventures to tell. The others, in pursuing their course up the Wind River Valley, had been dogged the whole way by a war party of Crows. In one place, they had been fired upon, but without injury; in another place, one of their horses had been cut loose, and carried off. Some of the trappers, however, pursued their vocations about the neighbouring streams whenever there was a halt. While one of them was setting his traps, he heard the tramp of horses, and looking up, beheld a party of Crow braves moving along at no great distance, with a considerable cavalcade. The trapper was discerned by the quick eye of the savages, and with whoops and yells they dragged him from his hiding-place, flourished over his head their tomahawks and scalping-knives, and for a time the poor trapper gave himself up for lost. Fortunately, the Crows were in a jocose mood, amusing themselves heartily at the expense of his terrors; and after having played off divers Crow pranks and pleasantries, suffered him to depart unharmed. It is true, they stripped him completely, one taking his horse, another his gun, a third his traps, a fourth his blanket,

and so on, through all his accoutrements, and even his clothing, until he was stark naked; but then they generously made him a present of an old tattered buffalo robe, and dismissed him, with many complimentary speeches, and much laughter.

When the trapper returned to the camp, in such sorry plight, he was greeted with peals of laughter from his comrades, and seemed more mortified by the style in which he had been dismissed than rejoiced at escaping with his life. The Crows had evidently had a run of luck, and, like winning gamblers, were in high good humour. Among twenty-six fine horses, and some mules, which composed their cavalcade, the trapper recognised a number which had belonged to Fitzpatrick's brigade, when they parted company on the Big Horn. It was supposed, therefore, that these vagabonds had been on his trail, and robbed him of part of his cavalry.

On the day following this affair, three Crows came into Captain Bonneville's camp, with the most easy, innocent, if not impudent, air imaginable; walking about with that imperturbable coolness and unconcern in which the Indian rivals the fine gentleman. As they had not been of the set which stripped the trapper, though evidently of the same band, they were not molested. Indeed, Captain Bonneville treated them with his usual kindness, permitting them to remain all day in the camp, and even to pass the night there. At the same time, however, he caused a strict watch to be maintained on all their movements; and at night stationed an armed sentinel near them, for he suspected them to be spies. He warned his guests, that while they were perfectly welcome to the shelter and comfort of his camp, yet, should any of their tribe venture to

approach during the night, they would certainly be shot; which would be a very unfortunate circumstance, and much to be deplored. To the latter remark, they fully assented; and shortly afterward commenced a wild song, or chant, which they kept up for a long time. In this they very probably gave their friends notice that the white men were on the alert. In the morning, the three Crow guests were very pressing that Captain Bonneville and his party should accompany them to their camp, which they said was close by. Instead of accepting their invitation, Captain Bonneville took his departure with all possible despatch, eager to be out of the vicinity of such a piratical horde.

As the time had now arrived for Captain Bonneville to go in quest of the party of free trappers, detached in the beginning of July, under the command of Mr. Hodgkiss, he took a temporary leave of his band, appointing a rendezvous on Snake River, and, accompanied by three men, set out upon his journey.

Except for a friendly meeting with a small band of Bannock Indians, the trip, which lasted from the 11th to the 20th of November, was without incident, and he readily found the trail and then the encampment of Hodgkiss and his free trappers. Meantime he had determined upon a spot for winter quarters along the Snake River, not far from the Portneuf, whither he soon lead his reunited band.

Winter then set in regularly. The snow fell frequently and in large quantities, and covered the ground to the depth of a foot; and the continued coldness of the weather prevented any thaw. By degrees, a distrust which at first subsisted between the Bannock Indians, who were encamped near by, and the trappers

subsided, and gave way to mutual confidence and good-will. A few presents convinced the chiefs that the white men were their friends: nor were the white men wanting in proofs of the honesty and good faith of their savage neighbours.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### DOWN THE COLUMBIA

BEING convinced that his people would pass their winter unmolested, Captain Bonneville prepared for a reconnoitring expedition of great extent and peril. This was, to penetrate to the Hudson Bay establishments on the banks of the Columbia, and to make himself acquainted with the country and the Indian tribes; it being one part of his scheme to establish a trading post on the lower part of the river, so as to participate in the trade lost to the United States by the capture of Astoria.

He chose three companions for his journey, put up a small stock of necessaries in the most portable form, and selected five horses and mules for themselves and their baggage. All these arrangements being completed, he mounted his horse on Christmas morning, and set off with his three comrades. They halted a little beyond the Bannock camp, and made their Christmas dinner, which, if not a very merry, was a very hearty one; after which they resumed their journey.

We will not pretend to accompany the travellers step by step in the tremendous mountain scrambles into which they unconsciously betrayed themselves. Day after day did their toil continue; peak after peak had they to traverse, struggling with difficulties and hardships known only to the mountain trapper. As their

course lay north, they had to ascend the southern faces of the heights, where the sun had so melted the snow as to render the ascent wet and slippery, and to keep both men and horses continually on the strain; while on the northern sides, the snow lay in such heavy masses that it was necessary to beat a track down which the horses might be led.

They and their horses were almost ready to give out with fatigue and hunger, when one afternoon, just as the sun was sinking, they came to the brow of a height from which they beheld a smooth valley stretched out in smiling verdure before them. The sight inspired almost a frenzy of delight. Roused to new ardour, they forgot for a time their fatigues, and hurried down the mountain, dragging their jaded horses after them, and sometimes compelling them to slide a distance of thirty or forty feet at a time.

It was now (the 16th of February) fifty-three days that they had been travelling in the midst of winter, exposed to all kinds of privations and hardships; and for the last twenty days they had been entangled in the wild and desolate labyrinths of snowy mountains. Hence, it added much to their joy to observe Indian trails along the margin of the stream, and other signs which gave them reason to believe that there was an encampment of the Lower Nez Percés in the neighbourhood. In fact, next day they caught sight of an Indian horseman at a distance. When he saw them, he suddenly came to a halt and seemed about to make a cautious retreat. He remained for some time in doubt; but at length, having satisfied himself that they were not enemies, came galloping up to them, mounted on a high-mettled steed, with gaudy trappings and equipments.

Approaching them with an air of protection, he gave them his hand, and, in the Nez Percé language, invited them to his camp, which was only a few miles distant. There he had plenty to eat, and plenty of horses, and would cheerfully share his good things with them. Then, wheeling round and giving reins to his mettlesome steed, he was soon out of sight. The travellers followed with gladdened hearts, but at a snail's pace; for their poor horses could scarcely drag one leg after the other. Captain Bonneville, however, experienced a sudden and singular change of feeling. Hitherto, the necessity of conducting his party, and of providing against every emergency, had kept his mind upon the stretch, and his whole system braced and excited. Now that all danger was over, and the march of a few miles would bring them to repose and abundance, his energies suddenly deserted him; and every faculty, mental and physical, was totally relaxed. He had not proceeded two miles when he threw himself upon the earth without the power or will to move a muscle or exert a thought, and sank almost instantly into a profound and dreamless sleep. His companions came to a halt, and encamped beside him, and there they passed the night.

The next morning Captain Bonneville awoke from his long and heavy sleep, much refreshed; and they all resumed their creeping progress. They had not been long on the march, when eight or ten of the Nez Percé tribe came galloping to meet them, leading fresh horses to bear them to their camp. Thus gallantly mounted, they felt new life infused into their languid frames, and dashing forward, were soon at the lodges of the Nez Percés. Here they found about twelve families living together, under the patriarchal sway of an ancient and venerable chief. He received them with the

hospitality of the golden age, and with something of the same kind of fare; for while he opened his arms to make them welcome, the only repast he set before them consisted of roots. They could have wished for something more hearty and substantial; but, for want of better, made a voracious meal on these humble viands. The repast being over, the best pipe was lighted and sent round; this was a most welcome luxury, for they had lost their smoking apparatus twelve days before, among the mountains.

While they were thus enjoying themselves, their poor horses were led to the best pastures in the neighbourhood, where they were turned loose to revel on the fresh sprouting grass; so that they had better fare than their masters.

Captain Bonneville soon felt himself quite at home among these quiet, inoffensive people. His long residence among their cousins, the Upper Nez Percés, had made him conversant with their language, modes of expression, and all their habits. He soon found, too, that he was well known among them, by report at least, from the constant interchange of visits and messages between the two branches of the tribe. They at first addressed him by his name, giving him his title of Captain, with a French accent; but they soon gave him a title of their own, which, as usual with Indian titles, had a peculiar signification. In the case of the Captain, it had somewhat of a whimsical origin.

As he sat chatting and smoking in the midst of them, he would occasionally take off his cap. Whenever he did so, there was a sensation in the surrounding circle. The Indians would half rise from their recumbent posture, and gaze upon his uncovered head, with their usual exclamation of astonishment. The worthy Cap-





CRATER OF THE GROTTO GEYSER



tain was completely bald; a phenomenon very surprising in their eyes. They were at a loss to know whether he had been scalped in battle, or enjoyed a natural immunity from that belligerent infliction. In a little while, he became known among them by an Indian name signifying "the bald chief,"—"a soubriquet," observes the Captain, "for which I can find no parallel in history since the days of 'Charles the Bald.'"

Captain Bonneville slept in the lodge of the venerable patriarch, who had evidently conceived a most disinterested affection for him, as was shown on the following morning. The travellers, invigorated by a good supper and "fresh from the bath of repose," were about to resume their journey, when this affectionate old chief took the Captain aside, to let him know how much he loved him. As a proof of his regard, he had determined to give him a fine horse, which would go further than words, and put his good-will beyond all question. So saying, he made a signal, and forthwith a beautiful young horse of a brown colour was led, prancing and snorting, to the place. Captain Bonneville was suitably affected by this mark of friendship; but his experience in what is proverbially called "Indian giving" made him aware that a parting pledge was necessary on his own part, to prove that his friendship was reciprocated. He accordingly placed a handsome rifle in the hands of the venerable chief, whose benevolent heart was evidently touched and gratified by this outward and visible sign of amity.

Having now, as he thought, balanced this little account of friendship, the captain was about to shift his saddle to this noble gift-horse, when the affectionate patriarch plucked him by the sleeve and introduced to him a whimpering, whining, leathern-skinned old

squaw, that might have passed for an Egyptian mummy without drying. "This," said he, "is my wife: she is a good wife—I love her very much—she loves the horse—she loves him a great deal—she will cry very much at losing him.—I do not know how I shall comfort her—and that makes my heart very sore."

What could the worthy Captain do, to console the tender-hearted old squaw, and, peradventure, to save the venerable patriarch from a curtain lecture? He bethought himself of a pair of ear-bobs: it was true the patriarch's better-half was of an age and appearance that seemed to put personal vanity out of the question, but when is personal vanity extinct? The moment he produced the glittering ear-bobs, the whimpering and whining of the sempiternal beldame was at an end. She eagerly placed the precious baubles in her ears, and, though as ugly as the Witch of Endor, went off with a sidling gait and coquettish air, as though she had been a perfect Semiramis.

The Captain had now saddled his newly acquired steed, and his foot was in the stirrup, when the affectionate patriarch again stepped forward, and presented to him a young Pierced-nose, who had a peculiarly sulky look. "This," said the venerable chief, "is my son: he is very good—a great horseman—he always took care of this very fine horse—he brought him up from a colt, and made him what he is.—He is very fond of this fine horse—he loves him like a brother—his heart will be very heavy when this fine horse leaves the camp."

What could the Captain do to reward the youthful hope of this venerable pair, and comfort him for the loss of his foster-brother, the horse? He bethought him of a hatchet, which might be spared from his slen-

der stores. No sooner did he place the implement in the hands of the young hopeful, than his countenance brightened up, and he went off rejoicing in his hatchet, to the full as much as did his respectable mother in her ear-bobs.

The Captain was now in the saddle, and about to start, when the affectionate old patriarch stepped forward, for the third time, and, while he laid one hand gently on the mane of the horse, held up the rifle in the other. "This rifle," said he, "shall be my great medicine. I will hug it to my heart—I will always love it, for the sake of my good friend, the bald-headed chief. But a rifle, by itself, is dumb—I cannot make it speak. If I had a little powder and ball, I would take it out with me, and would now and then shoot a deer; and when I brought the meat home to my hungry family, I would say—This was killed by the rifle of my friend, the bald-headed chief, to whom I gave that very fine horse."

There was no resisting this appeal: the Captain forthwith furnished the coveted supply of powder and ball; but at the same time put spurs to his very fine gift-horse, to get away from all further manifestation of friendship on the part of the affectionate old patriarch and his insinuating family.

Captain Bonneville and his companions had pursued their journey a considerable distance down the course of Snake River, when an old chief who acted as their guide halted on the bank, and recommended that they should turn their horses loose to graze, while he summoned a cousin of his from a group of lodges on the opposite side of the stream. His summons was quickly answered. An Indian, of an active, elastic form, leaped into a light canoe of cottonwood and vigorously ply-

ing the paddle, soon shot across the river. Bounding on shore, he advanced with a buoyant air and frank demeanour, and gave his right hand to each of the party in turn. He evinced the usual curiosity to know all about the strangers,—whence they came, whither they were going, the object of their journey, and the adventures they had experienced. He then desired the party to await his return, and, springing into his canoe, darted across the river. In a little while he returned, bringing a most welcome supply of tobacco, and a small stock of provisions for the road, declaring his intention of accompanying the party.

That night they put up in the hut of a Nez Percé, where they were visited by several warriors from the other side of the river, friends of the old chief and his cousin, who came to have a talk and a smoke with the white men. The heart of the good old chief was overflowing with good-will at thus being surrounded by his new and old friends, and he talked with more spirit and vivacity than ever. The evening passed away in perfect harmony and good-humour, and it was not until a late hour that the visitors took their leave and recrossed the river.

In the course of the social and harmonious evening just mentioned, one of the Captain's men produced a small skin, a great rarity in the eyes of men conversant in peltries. It attracted much attention among the visitors from beyond the river, who passed it from one to the other, examined it with looks of lively admiration, and pronounced it a great "medicine."

In the morning, when the Captain and his party were about to set off, the precious skin was missing. Search was made for it in the hut, but it was nowhere to be found; and it was strongly suspected that it had been

purloined by some of the connoisseurs from the other side of the river.

The old chief and his cousin were indignant at their friends across the water, and called out for them to come over and answer for their shameful conduct. The others answered to the call with all the promptitude of perfect innocence, and spurned the idea of their being capable of such outrage upon any of the Big-hearted nation. All were at a loss on whom to fix the crime of abstracting the invaluable skin, when by chance the eyes of the worthies from beyond the water fell upon an unhappy cur, belonging to the owner of the hut. He was a gallows-looking dog, but not more so than most Indian dogs, who, take them in the mass, are little better than a generation of vipers. Be that as it may, he was instantly accused of having devoured the skin in question. The unfortunate cur was arraigned; his thievish looks substantiated his guilt, and he was condemned by his judges from across the river to be hanged. He was doubly guilty: first, in having robbed their good friends, the Big Hearts of the East; secondly, in having brought a doubt on the honour of the Nez Percé tribe. He was, accordingly, swung aloft, and pelted with stones to make his death more certain. The sentence of the judges being thoroughly executed, the body of the dog was opened, and the intestines rigorously scrutinised, but, to the horror of all concerned, not a particle of the skin was to be found—the dog had been unjustly executed!

It was with the utmost difficulty that the Captain and his comrades could calm the party from across the river, whose jealousy of their good name now prompted them to the most vociferous vindications of their innocence. The warriors now returned across the river,

the Captain and his comrades proceeded on their journey; but the spirits of the communicative old chief were for a time completely dampened. He rode in silence, except that now and then he would give way to a burst of indignation, and exclaim, with a shake of the head and a toss of the hand toward the opposite shore—"Bad men, very bad men across the river."

After some time, the countenance of the old chief again cleared up, and he fell into repeated conferences, in an undertone, with his cousin, which ended in the departure of the latter, who, applying the lash to his horse, dashed forward and was soon out of sight. In fact, they were drawing near to the village of another chief, commonly known as the great chief. The cousin had been sent ahead to give notice of their approach; a herald appeared as before, bearing a powder-horn, to enable them to respond to the intended salute. A scene ensued, on their approach to the village, similar to that at several other villages. Then came on the firing of salutes, and the shaking of hands; for the Indians have an idea that it is as indispensable an overture of friendship among the whites as smoking of the pipe is among the red men. The travellers were next ushered to the banquet, where all the choicest viands that the village could furnish were served up in rich profusion. They were afterwards entertained by games and horse-races; indeed, their visit to the village seemed the signal for complete festivity. In the meantime, a skin lodge had been spread for their accommodation, their horses and baggage were taken care of, and wood and water supplied in abundance.

At night a crowd of visitors awaited their appearance, all eager for a smoke and a talk. The pipe was immediately lighted, and the utmost eagerness was evinced



to learn everything respecting the Americans, for whom they professed the most fraternal regard. To their inquiries as to the numbers of the people of the United States, the Captain assured them that they were as countless as the blades of grass in the prairies, and that, great as Snake River was, if they were all encamped upon its banks, they would drink it dry in a single day. To these and similar statistics, they listened with profound attention, and apparently implicit belief.

The fame of the Captain as a healer of diseases had accompanied him to this village, and the great chief now entreated him to exert his skill on his daughter, who had been for three days racked with pains, which the Pierced-nose doctors could not relieve. The Captain was touched by the sufferings of the poor girl, for she was but about sixteen years of age, and uncommonly beautiful in form and feature. The only difficulty with the Captain was, that he knew nothing of her malady. So, after considering and cogitating for some time, he made a desperate dash at a remedy. By his directions, the girl was placed in a sort of rude vapour-bath, where she was kept until near fainting. He then gave her a dose of gunpowder dissolved in water, and ordered her to be wrapped in buffalo robes and put to sleep under a load of furs and blankets. The remedy succeeded: the next morning she was free from pain, though extremely languid; whereupon, the Captain prescribed for her a bowl of colt's head broth, and that she should be kept for a time on simple diet.

The great chief was unbounded in his expressions of gratitude for the recovery of his daughter. He would fain have detained the Captain a long time as his guest, but the time for departure had arrived. When the Captain's horse was brought for him to mount, the chief

declared that the steed was not worthy of him, and sent for one of his best horses, which he presented in its stead; declaring that it made his heart glad to see his friend so well mounted. He then appointed a young Nez Percé to accompany his guests to the next village, and "to carry his talk" concerning them; and the two parties separated with mutual expressions of kindness and feelings of good-will.

The travellers now traversed a gently undulating country, of such fertility that it excited the rapturous admiration of two of the Captain's followers, a Kentuckian and a native of Ohio. They declared that it surpassed any land that they had ever seen, and often exclaimed, what a delight it would be just to run a plough through such a rich and teeming soil, and see it open its bountiful promise before the share. In their progress, they met with several bands of Nez Percés, by whom they were invariably treated with the utmost kindness. Within seven days they struck the Columbia River at Fort Walla-Walla, where they arrived on the 4th of March, 1834.

Fort Walla-Walla was a trading post of the Hudson Bay Company, situated just above the mouth of the river of the same name, and on the left bank of the Columbia. It was built of driftwood, and calculated merely for defence against any attack of the natives.

The great post and fort of the company was Fort Vancouver, on the right bank of the Columbia, just above the mouth of the Willamette, whither the company removed its establishment from Astoria, in 1821, after its coalition with the Northwest Company.

Captain Bonneville and his comrades experienced a polite reception from the superintendent, for, however hostile the members of the British company may have

been to the enterprises of American traders, they always manifested great courtesy and hospitality to the traders themselves.

Captain Bonneville had intended to remain some time in this neighbourhood, to form an acquaintance with the natives and to collect information, and establish connections that might be advantageous in the way of trade. The delays, however, which he had experienced on his journey obliged him to shorten his sojourn, and to set off as soon as possible, so as to reach the rendezvous at the Portneuf at the appointed time. He had seen enough to convince him that an American trade might be carried on with advantage in this quarter; and he determined soon to return with a stronger party, more completely fitted for the purpose.

Accordingly, on the 6th of March, he and his three companions, accompanied by their Nez Percé guides, set out on their return. They touched again at several of the Nez Percé villages, where they had experienced such kind treatment on their way down. They were always welcomed with cordiality; and everything was done to cheer them on their journey.

On leaving one of the villages, they were joined by a Nez Percé, whose society was welcomed on account of the general gratitude and good-will they felt for his tribe. He soon proved a heavy clog upon the little party, being doltish and taciturn, lazy in the extreme, and a huge feeder. His only proof of intellect was in shrewdly avoiding all labour, and availing himself of the toil of others.

When meal-time arrived, however, then came his season of activity. He no longer hung back and waited for others to take the lead, but distinguished himself by a brilliancy of onset, and a sustained vigour

and duration of attack, that completely shamed the efforts of his competitors—albeit experienced trenchermen of no mean prowess. Having, by repeated and prolonged assaults, at length completely gorged himself, he would wrap himself up, and lie with the torpor of an anaconda, slowly digesting his way to the next repast. He was regarded askance, at his meals, as a regular kill-crop, destined to waste the substance of the party. In fact, nothing but a sense of the obligations they were under to his nation induced them to bear with such a guest.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SHE-WEE-SHE

AS Captain Bonneville and his men were encamped one evening among the hills near Snake River, seated before their fire, enjoying a hearty supper, they were suddenly surprised by the visit of an uninvited guest. He was a ragged, half-naked Indian hunter, armed with bow and arrows, and had the carcass of a fine buck thrown across his shoulder. Advancing with an alert step, and free and easy air, he threw the buck on the ground, and, without waiting for an invitation, seated himself at their mess, helped himself without ceremony, and chatted to the right and left in the liveliest and most unembarrassed manner. The travellers were at first completely taken by surprise, and could not but admire the facility with which this ragged cosmopolite made himself at home among them. While they stared he went on, making the most of the good cheer upon which he had so fortunately alighted; and was soon elbow deep in "pot luck," and greased from the tip of his nose to the back of his ears.

In the course of his repast, his attention was caught by the figure of the gastronome, who, as usual, was gorging himself in dogged silence. A droll cut of the eye showed either that he knew him of old, or perceived at once his characteristics. He immediately made him the butt of his pleasantries; and cracked off two or

three good hits, that caused the sluggish dolt to prick up his ears, and delighted all the company. From this time the uninvited guest was taken into favour; his jokes began to be relished; his careless, free, and easy air to be considered singularly amusing; and in the end, he was pronounced by the travellers one of the merriest companions and most entertaining vagabonds they had met with in the wilderness.

Supper being over, the redoubtable She-wee-she, for such was his name, declared his intention of keeping company with the party for a day or two, if they had no objection; and by way of backing his self-invitation, presented the carcass of the buck as an earnest of his hunting abilities. By this time, he had so completely effaced the unfavourable impression made by his first appearance, that he was made welcome to the camp, and the Nez Percé guide undertook to give him lodging for the night. The next morning, at break of day, he borrowed a gun, and was off among the hills, nor was anything more seen of him until a few minutes after the party had encamped for the evening, when he again made his appearance, in his usual frank, careless manner, and threw down the carcass of another noble deer, which he had borne on his back for a considerable distance.

This evening he was the life of the party, and his open, communicative disposition, free from all disguise, soon put them in possession of his history. He had been a kind of prodigal son in his native village; living a loose, heedless life, and disregarding the precepts and imperative commands of the chiefs. He had, in consequence, been expelled from the village, but, in nowise disheartened at this banishment, had betaken himself to the society of the border Indians, and had led a

careless, haphazard, vagabond life, perfectly consonant to his humours; heedless of the future, so long as he had wherewithal for the present: and fearing no lack of food, so long as he had the implements of the chase, and a fair hunting ground.

Finding him very expert as a hunter, and being pleased with his eccentricities, and his strange and merry humour, Captain Bonneville fitted him out handsomely as the Nimrod of the party. Meantime the doltish Nez Percé, whom the travellers had endeavoured to elbow out of their society, could not withstand the bantering and sharp wit of She-wee-she, for he sat blinking like an owl in daylight, when pestered by the flouts and peckings of mischievous birds. At length his place was found vacant at meal-time; he was seen no more; and the vast surplus that remained when the repast was over, showed what a mighty gormandiser had departed.

Relieved from this incubus, the little party now went on cheerily. She-wee-she kept them in fun as well as food. His hunting was always successful; he was ever ready to render any assistance in the camp or on the march; while his jokes, his antics, and the very cut of his countenance, so full of whim and comicality, kept every one in good-humour.

Near some Nez Percé lodges one day, She-wee-she took a sudden notion to visit his people, and show off the state of worldly prosperity to which he had attained. Accordingly, arrayed in hunter's style, and well appointed with everything befitting his vocation, he anticipated, with chuckling satisfaction, the surprise he was about to give those who had ejected him from their society in rags. But when he rejoined the party in the evening, he came skulking into camp like a beaten cur with his tail between his legs. All his finery was

gone; he was naked as when he was born, with the exception of a scanty flap that answered the purpose of a fig-leaf. His fellow-travellers at first did not know him; but when they recognised in this forlorn object their prime wag, She-wee-she, they could not contain their merriment, but hailed him with loud and repeated peals of laughter.

She-wee-she was not of a spirit to be easily cast down; he soon joined in the merriment as heartily as any one, and seemed to consider his reverse of fortune an excellent joke. Captain Bonneville, however, thought proper to check his good-humour, and demanded, with some degree of sternness, the cause of his altered condition. He replied in the most natural and self-complacent style imaginable, "that he had been among his cousins, who were very poor; they had been delighted to see him; still more delighted with his good fortune; they had taken him to their arms; admired his equipments; one had begged for this; another for that"—in fine, what with the poor devil's inherent heedlessness, and the real generosity of his disposition, his needy cousins had succeeded in stripping him of all his clothes and accoutrements.

He was accordingly left to shift for himself in his naked condition; which, however, did not seem to give him any concern, or to abate one jot of his good-humour. In the course of his lounging about the camp, however, he got possession of a deer-skin; whereupon, cutting a slit in the middle, he thrust his head through it, so that the two ends hung down before and behind. These ends he tied together, under the armpits; and thus arrayed, presented himself once more before the Captain, with an air of perfect self-satisfaction, as though he thought it impossible for any fault to be found with his toilet.



A little further journeying brought the travellers to the petty village of Nez Percés, governed by the worthy and affectionate old patriarch who had made Captain Bonneville the costly present of the very fine horse. The old man welcomed them once more to his village with his usual cordiality, and his respectable squaw and hopeful son, cherishing grateful recollections of the hatchet and ear-bobs, joined in a chorus of friendly congratulation.

As the much-vaunted steed, once the joy and pride of this interesting family, was now nearly knocked out by travelling, and totally inadequate to the mountain scramble that lay ahead, Captain Bonneville restored him to the venerable patriarch, with renewed acknowledgments for the invaluable gift. Somewhat to his surprise, he was immediately supplied with a fine two-year-old colt in his stead, a substitution which, he afterwards learnt, according to Indian custom in such cases, he might have claimed as a matter of right.

On the second day after leaving the patriarch's, the party moved along slowly. She-wee-she, for the greater part of the time, trudged on foot over the snow, keeping himself warm by hard exercise and all kinds of crazy capers. In the height of his foolery, the patriarchal colt, which, unbroken to the saddle, was suffered to follow on at large, happened to come within his reach. In a moment he was on its back, snapping his fingers, and yelping with delight. The colt, unused to such a burden, and half-wild by nature, fell to prancing and rearing, and at length set off at full speed over the most dangerous ground.

As the route led generally along the steep and craggy sides of the hills, both horse and horseman were constantly in danger. Nothing, however, could

daunt this madcap savage. He stuck to the colt like a plaster, up ridges, down gullies, whooping and yelling with the wildest glee. His companions followed him with their eyes, sometimes laughing, sometimes holding their breath at his vagaries, until they saw the colt make a sudden plunge and pitch his rider headlong over a precipice. There was a general cry of horror, and all hastened to the spot. They found the poor fellow lying among the rocks below, sadly bruised and mangled. Even in this condition, his merry spirit was not entirely quelled, and he summoned up a feeble laugh at the alarm and anxiety of those who came to his relief. He was extricated from his rocky bed, and stretched upon buffalo skins, the Captain proceeding to examine his wounds. The principal one was a long and deep gash in the thigh, which reached to the bone. Calling for a needle and thread, the Captain now prepared to sew up the wound, warning the patient to submit to the operation with becoming fortitude. His gaiety was at an end; he could no longer summon up even a forced smile; and, at the first puncture of the needle, flinched so piteously that the Captain was obliged to pause, and to order him a powerful dose of alcohol.

When the wound was fairly closed, the Captain washed it with rum, and administered a second dose of the same to the patient, who was tucked in for the night, and advised to compose himself to sleep. He was restless and uneasy, however; repeatedly expressing his fears that his leg would be so much swollen the next day as to prevent his proceeding with the party; nor could he be quieted until the Captain gave a decided opinion favourable to his wishes.

Early the next morning, a gleam of his merry

humour returned when he found that his wounded limb retained its natural proportions. On attempting to use it, however, he found himself unable to stand. He made several efforts to coax himself into a belief that he might still continue forward; but at length shook his head despondingly, and said that "as he had but one leg," it was all in vain to attempt a passage of the mountain.

Every one grieved to part with so boon a companion, and under such disastrous circumstances. He was once more clothed and equipped, each one making him some parting present. He was then helped on a horse, which Captain Bonneville presented to him; and after many parting expressions of good-will on both sides, set off on his return to his old haunts; doubtless to be plucked once more by his affectionate but needy cousins.

Nothing particularly worthy of note occurred during several days as the party proceeded up along Snake River and across its tributary streams.

On the 12th of May Captain Bonneville reached the Portneuf River, in the vicinity of which he had left the winter encampment of his company on the preceding Christmas day. He had then expected to be back by the beginning of March, but circumstances had detained him upwards of two months beyond the time, and the winter encampment must long ere this have been broken up. It was not until the 1st of June that he found some of his men, and learnt that the whole party which he had left in the preceding month of December were encamped on Blackfoot River, a tributary of Snake River, not very far above the Portneuf. Thither he proceeded with all possible despatch, and in a little while had the pleasure of finding himself

once more surrounded by his people, who greeted his return among them in the heartiest manner; for his long-protracted absence had convinced them that he and his three companions had been cut off by some hostile tribe.

After two days of festive indulgence, Captain Bonneville broke up the encampment, and set out with his motley crew of hired and free trappers, half-breeds, Indians, and squaws, for the main rendezvous in Bear River Valley. There he found his exploring party, sent out the year before under Mr. Walker, already encamped and awaiting him, and with a thrilling tale of adventure to relate.

It had been on the 24th of July in the preceding year (1833) that the brigade of forty men set out from the Green River Valley, ostensibly to explore the Great Salt Lake, and the resources of Captain Bonneville had been tasked to the utmost to furnish it a complete equipment. Near the northern end of the lake they stopped until they had laid in a supply of dried buffalo meat and venison, and then they took a westerly course through the desert region to the sinks of the Humboldt River. There, being much annoyed by the thefts of the Digger Indians,—otherwise a harmless and friendly race,—the trappers wantonly killed several and then fired upon a crowd, leaving about forty dead on the field.

With great suffering and with many difficulties they crossed the Sierras, and, from their descriptions, they may have been the first to descend the Yosemite Valley. Soon after this they reached San Francisco Bay, and on the 20th of November, they caught sight of the Pacific. There, too, they met the Boston ship *Ladoga*, purchasing from its captain with their furs a stock of provisions, of which they stood in great need.

The wandering band of trappers were well received at Monterey; the inhabitants were desirous of retaining them among them, and offered extravagant wages to such as were acquainted with any mechanic art. When they went into the country, too, they were kindly treated by the priests at the mission. They had no lack of provisions; being permitted to kill as many as they pleased of the vast herds of cattle that grazed the country, on condition, merely, of rendering the hides to the owners. They attended bull-fights and horse-races; forgot all the purposes of their expedition; squandered away, freely, the property that did not belong to them; and, in a word, revelled in a perfect fool's paradise.

The winter slipped quickly away in a round of bull-fights, horse-races, and hunts—a paradise compared with trapping amongst the mountains. At length, lazily, and with the loss of six men,—all mechanics,—they took their departure from the sunny scenes of California, and slowly began their return trip. To avoid the difficulties encountered in crossing the Sierras on their outward way, they encircled them around the southern end, and then, through the foot-hills on the eastern side, they journeyed northward until they struck their old trail, along which, in great part, they returned to the appointed rendezvous on the Bear River, arriving there on June 1st, some twenty days ahead of Captain Bonneville and his party. When the Californians repassed the “ Battle ” lakes, they encountered the same band of Indians as before, only with numbers doubled, and, partly through fear, and partly from savagery, they repeated the butchery of their outward trip.

The horror and indignation felt by Captain Bonne-

ville at the excesses of the Californian adventurers were not participated in by his men; on the contrary, the events of that expedition were favourite themes in the camp. The heroes of Monterey bore the palm in all the gossipings among the hunters. Their glowing descriptions of Spanish bear-baits and bull-fights especially, were listened to with intense delight; and had another expedition to California been proposed, the difficulty would have been to restrain a general eagerness to volunteer.

The various bands of Captain Bonneville's company had now been assembled for some time at the rendezvous. Their horses, as well as themselves, had recovered from past famine and fatigue, and were again fit for active service; and an impatience began to manifest itself among the men once more to take the field, and set off on some wandering expedition. At this juncture Mr. Cerré arrived at the rendezvous at the head of a supply party, bringing goods and equipments from the States. This active leader, it will be recollected, had embarked the year previously in skin-boats on the Big Horn, freighted with the year's collection of peltries.

The Captain now made his arrangements for the current year. Cerré and Walker, with a number of men who had been to California, were to proceed to St. Louis with the packages of furs collected during the past year. Another party, headed by a leader named Montero, was to proceed to the Crow country, trap upon its various streams, and among the Black Hills, and thence to proceed to Arkansas, where he was to go into winter quarters.

The Captain marked out for himself a widely different course. He intended to make another expedition,

with twenty-three men, to the lower part of the Columbia River, and to proceed to the valley of the Willamette; after wintering in those parts, and establishing a trade with those tribes, among whom he had sojourned on his first visit, he would return in the spring, cross the Rocky Mountains, and join Montero and his party in the month of July, at the rendezvous of the Arkansas; where he expected to receive his annual supplies from the States.

Just as the different parties were about to set out on the 3d of July, on their opposite routes, Captain Bonneville received intelligence that Wyeth,<sup>1</sup> the in-

<sup>1</sup> Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth was a successful business man in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when his attention was called to the Oregon Question, and his interest deeply roused in the Oregon region by the visionary enthusiast, Hugh J. Kelly, a Boston schoolmaster.

Wyeth at first thought to join fortunes with Kelly, who was then forming his Oregon Organisation Society; but he quickly found that Kelly's eloquence never reached the sticking-point, and that, if he were to accomplish anything, he must act by himself. Accordingly, having gathered some twenty recruits and bound them together by a strong compact, he left Boston during March, 1832, and, with some gains and losses among his followers, he reached the frontier town of Independence.

The confidence and courage of Wyeth's men had already been badly shaken by contact with M'Kenzie, who was down from Fort Union, and by contrast with Sublette's thorough knowledge of the mountain business. In fact, the enterprise would have been abandoned at Independence had not W. L. Sublette taken them in charge, readily seeing that he had nothing to fear from such an inexperienced band, and that in time he should most likely absorb both men and outfit into his own company.

They reached the rendezvous at Pierre's Hole, July 8th, without accident, where seven of Wyeth's men refused to go farther, and returned with W. L. Sublette's returning party;

defatigable leader of the salmon-fishing enterprise, who had parted with him about a year previously on the banks of the Big Horn, to descend that wild river in a bull-boat, was near at hand, with a new-levied band of hunters and trappers, and was on his way once more to the banks of the Columbia.

As we take much interest in the enterprise of this "Eastern man," and are pleased with his persevering spirit, and as his movements are characteristic of life in the wilderness, we will, with the reader's permission, while Captain Bonneville is breaking up his camp and saddling his horses, step back a year in time, and a few hundred miles in distance, to the bank of the

Wyeth and the remaining fourteen went on with Milton G. Sublette, who was proceeding westward for the purpose of trapping and hunting. They witnessed the battle of Pierre's Hole and then went on, parting company with Sublette August 29th, on the Snake River. Wyeth and his men reached the Hudson Bay Company's post at Walla Walla October 14th, and there, a month later, he disbanded them, having learned during a visit to Fort Vancouver that his ship had been wrecked at the Society Islands, and he realised that the last hope for his plans had gone down with her. "I am now afloat on the great sea of life without stay or support."

Wyeth spent the winter at Fort Vancouver, being well treated by the agent of the Hudson Bay Company, and in February he set out for the East with a trading party bound from the post to the Flathead Indians. From their country he made his way, with one man from his original party, to a point near the Henry River, where he met Captain Bonneville and proposed a hunt as far as the Spanish settlements in California. This was agreed to, but for some unknown reason Walker lead that expedition instead of Wyeth, and Wyeth went directly home, joining the east-bound parties from the Green River rendezvous, and returning through South Pass and by his famous bull-boat down the Big Horn and the Yellowstone to Fort Union, described in the next chapter, and thence to St. Louis.



Big Horn, and launch ourselves with Wyeth in his bull-boat; and though his adventurous voyage will take us many hundreds of miles farther down wild and wandering rivers, yet such is the magic power of the pen, that we promise to bring the reader safe back to Bear River Valley, by the time the last horse is saddled.

## CHAPTER XX

### A VOYAGE IN A BULL-BOAT

**I**T was about the middle of August (1833) that Mr. Wyeth, as the reader may recollect, launched his bull-boat at the foot of the rapids of the Big Horn, and departed in advance of the parties of Campbell and Cerré. His boat was made of three buffalo skins, stretched on a light frame, stitched together, and the seams payed with elk tallow and ashes. It was eighteen feet long, and about five feet six inches wide, sharp at each end, with a round bottom, and drew about a foot and a half of water; a depth too great for these upper rivers, which abound with shallows and sand-bars. The crew consisted of two half-breeds, and a Nez Percé lad of eighteen years of age, a kind of servant of all work, whose great aim, like all Indian servants, was to do as little work as possible; there was, moreover, a half-breed boy, of thirteen, named Baptiste, who was travelling with Wyeth to see the world and complete his education. Add to these Mr. Milton Sublette, who went as passenger, and we have the crew of the little bull-boat complete.

It certainly was a slight armament with which to run the gauntlet through countries swarming with hostile hordes, and a slight bark to navigate those endless rivers, tossing and pitching down rapids, running on snags and bumping on sand-bars; such, however, were

the cockle-shells with which those hardy rovers of the wilderness would attempt the wildest streams; and it was surprising what rough shocks and thumps those boats would endure, and what vicissitudes they would live through. Milton Sublette was guide of this adventurous bark; being somewhat experienced in this wild kind of navigation.

At night they landed, hauled up their boat to dry, pitched their tent, and made a rousing fire. Then, as it was the first evening of their voyage, they indulged in a regale, relishing their buffalo beef with inspiring alcohol; after which they slept soundly, without dreaming of Crows or Blackfeet. Early in the morning, they again launched their boat and committed themselves to the stream.

In this way they voyaged for two days without any material occurrence. On the third morning, they descried some persons at a distance on the river bank. As they were now, by calculation, at no great distance from Fort Cass, a trading-post of the American Fur Company, they supposed these might be some of its people. A nearer approach showed them to be Indians. Descrying a woman apart from the rest, they landed and accosted her. She informed them that the main force of the Crow nation, consisting of five bands, under their several chiefs, were but about two or three miles below, on their way up along the river. This was unpleasant tidings, but to retreat was impossible, and the river afforded no hiding-place. They continued forward, therefore, trusting that, as Fort Cass was so near at hand, the Crows might refrain from any depredations.

Floating down about two miles farther, they came in sight of the first band, scattered along the river bank,

all well mounted; some armed with guns, others with bows and arrows, and a few with lances. They made a wildly picturesque appearance, managing their horses with accustomed dexterity and grace. Nothing can be more spirited than a band of Crow cavaliers. They are a fine race of men, averaging six feet in height, lithe and active, with hawk's eyes and Roman noses. The latter feature is common to the Indians on the east side of the Rocky Mountains; those on the western side have generally straight or flat noses.

Wyeth would fain have slipped by this cavalcade unnoticed; but the river, at this place, was not more than ninety yards across; he was perceived, therefore, and hailed by the vagabond warriors. Wyeth landed with the best grace in his power, and approached the chief of the band. It was Arapooish, whom we have already mentioned as being anxious to promote a friendly intercourse between his tribe and the white men. He was a tall, stout man, of good presence, and received the voyagers very graciously. His people, too, thronged around them, and were officiously attentive after the Crow fashion. One took a great fancy to Baptiste, the Flathead boy, and a still greater fancy to a ring on his finger, which he transposed to his own with surprising dexterity, and then disappeared with a quick step among the crowd.

Another was no less pleased with the Nez Percé lad, and nothing would do but he must exchange knives with him; drawing a new knife out of the Nez Percé's scabbard, and putting an old one in its place. Another stepped up and replaced this old knife with one still older, and a third helped himself to knife, scabbard, and all. It was with much difficulty that Wyeth and his companions extricated themselves from the clutches



MULTNOMAH FALLS  
From a photograph



of these officious Crows, before they were entirely plucked.

In this way he was overhauled by several bands, and by the time he and his people came out of the busy hands of the last, they were eased of most of their superfluities. Nothing, in all probability but the proximity of the American trading-post kept these land pirates from making a good prize of the bull-boat and all its contents.

The last band of Crow warriors had scarce disappeared in the cloud of dust they had raised, when our voyagers arrived at the mouth of the river, and glided into the current of the Yellowstone. Turning down this stream, they made for Fort Cass, which is situated on the right bank, about three miles below the Big Horn. On the opposite side they beheld a party of thirty-one savages, which they soon ascertained to be Blackfeet. The width of the river enabled them to keep at a sufficient distance, and they soon landed at Fort Cass. This was a mere fortification against Indians—being a stockade of about one hundred and thirty feet square, with two bastions at the extreme corners. M'Tulloch, an agent of the American Company, was stationed there with twenty men; two boats of fifteen tons burden were lying here; but at certain seasons of the year a steamboat came up to the fort.

At Fort Cass, Mr. Wyeth disposed of some packages of beaver, and a quantity of buffalo robes. On the following morning (August 18th), he once more launched his bull-boat, and proceeded down the Yellowstone, which inclined in an east-north-east direction.

After a time they came in sight of a gang of elk. Wyeth was immediately for pursuing them, rifle in hand, but saw evident signs of dissatisfaction in his

half-breed hunters, who considered him as trenching upon their province, and meddling with things quite above his capacity; for these veterans of the wilderness were exceedingly tenacious of their superiority, looking down with infinite contempt upon all raw beginners. The two worthies, therefore, sallied forth themselves, but after a time, returned empty-handed. They laid the blame, however, entirely on their guns. The next day they tried again and again nothing went off but the buffalo.

Wyeth now found there was danger of losing his dinner if he depended upon his hunters; he took rifle in hand, therefore, and went forth himself. In the course of an hour, he returned laden with buffalo meat, to the great mortification of the two regular hunters.

Their voyage was pleasant notwithstanding the perils by sea and land, with which they were environed. Whenever they could, they encamped on islands, for the greater security. If on the mainland, and in a dangerous neighbourhood, they would shift their camp after dark, leaving their fire burning, dropping down the river some distance, and making no fire at their second encampment. Sometimes they would float all night with the current, one keeping watch and steering while the rest slept: in such case, they would haul their boat on shore at noon on the following day to dry; for notwithstanding every precaution, she was gradually getting water-soaked and rotten.

The two knowing hunters had scarcely recovered from one mortification when they were fated to experience another. As the boat was gliding swiftly round a low promontory, thinly covered with trees, one of them gave the alarm of Indians. The boat was in-



stantly shoved from shore, and every one caught up his rifle. "Where are they?" cried Wyeth.

"There—there! riding on horseback!" cried one of the hunters.

"Yes; with white scarfs on!" cried the other.

Wyeth looked in the direction they pointed, but descried nothing but two bald eagles, perched on a low dry branch, beyond the thickets, and seeming, from the rapid motion of the boat, to be moving swiftly in an opposite direction. The detection of this blunder in the two veterans, who prided themselves on the sureness and quickness of their sight, produced a hearty laugh at their expense, and put an end to their vauntings.

On the 24th of August, the bull-boat emerged, with its adventurous crew, into the broad bosom of the mighty Missouri. Here, about six miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone, the voyagers landed at Fort Union, the distributing post of the American Fur Company in the western country. It was a stockaded fortress, about two hundred and twenty feet square, pleasantly situated on a high bank. Here they were hospitably entertained by Mr. M'Kenzie, the superintendent, and remained with him three days, enjoying the unusual luxuries of bread, butter, milk, and cheese, for the fort was well supplied with domestic cattle, though it had no garden.

As the bull-boat was now nearly worn out, and altogether unfit for the broader and more turbulent stream of the Missouri, it was given up, and a canoe of cottonwood, about twenty feet long, fabricated by the Blackfeet, was purchased to supply its place. In this Wyeth hoisted his sail, and bidding adieu to the hospitable superintendent of Fort Union, turned his prow to the east, and set off down the Missouri.

He had not proceeded many hours, before, in the evening, he came to a large keel boat, at anchor. It proved to be the boat of Captain William Sublette, freighted with munitions for carrying on a powerful opposition to the American Fur Company.

Here Milton Sublette determined to give up further voyaging in the canoe, and remain with his brother; accordingly, in the morning, the fellow-voyagers took kind leave of each other, and Wyeth continued on his course. There was now no one on board of his boat that had ever voyaged on the Missouri; it was, however, all plain sailing down the stream, without any chance of missing the way.

All day the voyagers pulled gently along, and landed in the evening and supped; then re-embarking, they suffered the canoe to float down with the current, taking turns to watch and sleep.

The voyagers were now out of range of the Crows and the Blackfeet; but they were approaching the country of the Aricaras; a tribe no less dangerous, who were, generally, hostile to small parties.

In passing through their country, Wyeth laid by all day, and drifted quietly down the river at night. In this way he passed on, until he supposed himself safely through the region of danger, when he resumed his voyaging in the open day. On the 3d of September he had landed, at midday, to dine; and while some were making a fire, one of the hunters mounted a high bank to look out for game. Instead of game he discovered a group of twenty-one lodges; and, from the number of horses, computed that there must be nearly a hundred Indians encamped there. They now drew their boat, with all speed and caution, into a thicket of water willows, and remained closely concealed all

day. As soon as the night closed in they re-embarked. The moon would rise early; so that they had but about two hours of darkness to get past the camp. The night, however, was cloudy, with a blustering wind. Silently, and with muffled oars, they glided down the river, keeping close under the shore opposite to the camp, watching its various lodges and fires, and the dark forms passing to and fro between them. Suddenly, on turning a point of land, they found themselves close upon a camp on their own side of the river. It appeared that not more than one half of the band had crossed. They were within a few yards of the shore; they saw distinctly the savages—some standing, some lying round the fire. Horses were grazing around. Some lodges were set up; others had been sent across the river. The red glare of the fires upon these wild groups and harsh faces, contrasted with the surrounding darkness, had a startling effect, as the voyagers suddenly came upon the scene. The dogs of the camp perceived them, and barked; but the Indians, fortunately, took no heed of their clamour. Wyeth instantly sheered his boat out into the stream: when, unluckily, it struck upon a sand-bar, and stuck fast. It was a perilous and trying situation; for he was fixed between the two camps, and within rifle range of both. All hands jumped out into the water, and launched their canoe again into deep water, and getting in, had the delight of seeing the camp fires of the savages soon fading in the distance.

We forbear to detail all the circumstances and adventures of upwards of a month's voyage, down the windings and doublings of this vast river; in the course of which they stopped occasionally at a post of one of the rival fur companies, or at a government

agency for an Indian tribe. At Leavenworth, the frontier post of the United States, where Mr. Wyeth arrived on the 27th of September, 1833, his first care was to have his Nez Percé Indian, and his half-breed boy, Baptiste, vaccinated. The sight of a soldier in full array, with what appeared to be a long knife glittering at the end of his musket, struck Baptiste with such affright that he took to his heels, and the Nez Percé would have followed him, had not Wyeth assured him of his safety. When they underwent the operation of the lancet, the doctor's wife and another lady were present—the first white women that they had seen; and they could not keep their eyes off them. On returning to the boat, they recounted to their companions all that they had observed at the fort; but were especially eloquent about the white squaws, who, they said, were white as snow, and more beautiful than any human being they had ever beheld.

We shall not accompany Mr. Wyeth any farther in his voyage; but will simply state that he made his way to Boston, where he succeeded in organising an association under the name of "The Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company," for his original objects of a salmon fishery and a trade in furs. A brig, the *May Dacre*, had been despatched for the Columbia with supplies; and he was now on his way to the same point, at the head of sixty men, whom he had enlisted at St. Louis; some of whom were experienced hunters, and all more habituated to the life of the wilderness than his first band of "down-easters."

We will now return to Captain Bonneville and his party, whom we left making up their packs and saddling their horses, in Bear River Valley.

## CHAPTER XXI

### FAREWELL TO THE MOUNTAINS

**I**T was the 3d of July that Captain Bonneville set out on his second visit to the banks of the Columbia, at the head of twenty-three men. He travelled leisurely, to keep his horses fresh, until, on the 10th of July, a scout brought word that Wyeth, with his band, was but fifty miles in the rear, and pushing forward with all speed. This caused some bustle in the camp; for it was important to get first to the buffalo ground to secure provisions for the journey.

In the course of the next few days Wyeth rode ahead of his party, and overtook Captain Bonneville. Their meeting was friendly and courteous; and they discussed sociably their respective fortunes since they separated on the banks of the Big Horn.

In Wyeth's company were travelling two men of science—Mr. Nuttall, the botanist, the same who ascended the Missouri at the time of the expedition to Astoria; and Mr. Townshend, the ornithologist. Also there were three missionaries, bound to the shores of the Columbia, to spread the light of the Gospel in that fair wilderness.

After riding for some time together, in friendly conversation, Wyeth returned to his party, and Captain Bonneville continued to press forward, and to gain ground. His scouts soon after brought word of a huge

herd of buffalo, and led the party to a plain that was for the next two days to witness all the scenes of a great buffalo hunt and the attendant curing and stowing away of the meat.

By this time Wyeth's party was in sight, and Wyeth himself came in the evening to pay Captain Bonneville a visit. He was accompanied by Captain Stewart, the amateur traveller, who had not yet sated his appetite for the adventurous life of the wilderness. With him, also, was a Mr. M'Kay, a half-breed, son of the unfortunate adventurer of the same name who came out in the first maritime expedition to Astoria and was blown up in the *Tonquin*. His son had grown up in the employ of the British fur companies; and was a prime hunter and a daring partisan. He held, moreover, a farm in the valley of the Willamette.

The Captain now set to work with his men to prepare a suitable entertainment for his guests. It was a time of plenty in the camp; of prime hunters' dainties,—of buffalo humps, and buffalo tongues, and roasted ribs, and broiled marrow-bones: all these were cooked in hunters' style, served up with a profusion known only on a plentiful hunting ground, and discussed with an appetite that would astonish the puny gourmands of the cities. But above all, and to give a bacchanalian grace to this truly masculine repast, the Captain produced a mellifluous keg of home-brewed nectar.

Early in the morning, Captain Bonneville ordered the half-dried meat to be packed upon the horses, and leaving Wyeth and his party to hunt the scattered buffalo, pushed off rapidly to regain the trail. On reaching the Columbia, Captain Bonneville hoped to open a trade with the natives, for fish and other provisions, but to his surprise, they kept aloof, and even

hid themselves on his approach. He soon discovered that they were under the influence of the Hudson Bay Company, who had forbidden them to trade, or hold any communion with him. He proceeded along the Columbia, but it was everywhere the same; not an article of provisions was to be obtained from the natives, and he was, at length, obliged to kill a couple of his horses to sustain his famishing people.

To advance under present circumstances would be to court starvation. The resources of the country were locked against them by the influence of a jealous and powerful monopoly. But by hastening their return, they would be able to reach the Blue Mountains just in time to find the elk, the deer, and the bighorn; and after they had supplied themselves with provisions, they might push through the mountains, before they were entirely blocked up by snow. Influenced by these considerations, Captain Bonneville reluctantly turned his back a second time on the Columbia, and set off for the Blue Mountains. He took his course up John Day's River, so called from one of the hunters in the original Astorian enterprise.

It was the 20th of October when they found themselves once more upon the banks of the Snake; but it was not until the travellers reached the headwaters of the Portneuf that they really found themselves in a region of abundance. Here two horsemen reached camp from Montero's party; which had been sent to beat up the Crow country and the Black Hills, and to winter on the Arkansas. The Captain retained the messengers with him until the 17th of November, when, having reached the caches on Bear River, and procured thence the required supplies, he sent them back to their party; appointing a rendezvous towards the last of June

following, on the forks of Wind River Valley, in the Crow country.

Game continued to abound throughout the winter; and the camp was overstocked with provisions. Beef and venison, humps and haunches, buffalo tongues and marrow-bones, were constantly cooking at every fire; and the whole atmosphere was redolent with the savoury fumes of roast meat.

The mountain business was already on its downhill road; none of the companies had made more than enough to pay their men, and an air of gloom had pervaded the annual (1834) rendezvous. Much to Wyeth's astonishment, when he reached that gathering, the goods which he had contracted to bring up for the Rocky Mountain Fur Company were refused by those honourable gentlemen—in fact, that body was on the point of dissolution, and was actually succeeded a month later (July 20th), by the new firm of Fitzpatrick, Sublette, and Bridger.

Meantime, Wyeth, finding himself encumbered with a quantity of goods which he had expected to be rid of at Green River, built a fort as soon as he reached Snake River, named it Fort Hall, and, having deposited there his surplus goods in the care of eleven men, he proceeded, reaching Fort Vancouver September 14, 1834. The brig *May Dacre* arrived next day, three months behind her schedule, and quite too late for the fishing season.

In spite of Wyeth's great efforts, however, his business did not prosper. "I was impressed," wrote an intelligent traveller,<sup>1</sup> "with the belief that he was, beyond comparison, the most talented business man from the States that ever established himself in Oregon.

<sup>1</sup> T. J. Farnham, *Travels in the Western Prairies*.



But in pursuance of the avowed doctrine of the Hudson Bay Company that no others have a right to trade in furs beyond the Rocky Mountains, whilst the use of capital and perseverance and their incomparable skill can prevent it, they established a fort near his at Fort Hall, preceded him, followed him, surrounded him everywhere, and cut the throat of his prosperity with such kindness and politeness that Wyeth was induced to sell his whole interest in Oregon to his generous, but too skilful and powerful antagonist." Like Astor, Wyeth failed through causes, partly international, over which an individual had no control.

The winter at last broke up, the snows melted from the hills and from the lower parts of the mountains, and the time for decamping arrived. Captain Bonneville despatched a party to the caches, who brought away all the effects concealed there, and on the 1st of April (1835), the camp was broken up, and every one on the move. Captain Bonneville and his party passed by Ham's Fork, and reached the Green River without accident, on the banks of which they remained during the residue of the spring.

On the 10th of June the party were a little to the east of Wind River Mountains, where they halted for a time in excellent pasturage, to give their horses a chance to recruit their strength for a long journey; for it was Captain Bonneville's intention to shape his course to the settlements; having already been detained by the complication of his duties, and by various losses and impediments, far beyond the time specified in his leave of absence.

While the party was thus reposing a solitary free trapper rode one day into the camp, and accosted Captain Bonneville. He belonged, he said, to a party of

thirty hunters, who had just passed through the neighbourhood, but whom he had abandoned in consequence of their ill treatment of a brother trapper, whom they had cast off from their party, and left with his bag and baggage, and an Indian wife into the bargain, in the midst of a desolate prairie. The horseman gave a piteous account of the situation of this helpless pair, and solicited the loan of horses to bring them and their effects to the camp.

The Captain was not a man to refuse assistance to any one in distress; horses were immediately despatched, with an escort, to aid the unfortunate couple. The next day, they made their appearance with all their effects: the man, a stalwart mountaineer, with a peculiarly game look; the woman, a young Blackfoot beauty, arrayed in the trappings and trinketry of a free trapper's bride.

Captain Bonneville drew from the Indian woman her whole story.

"I was the wife," said she, "of a Blackfoot warrior, and I served him faithfully. Who was so well served as he? Whose lodge was so well provided, or kept so clean? I brought wood in the morning, and placed water always at hand. I watched for his coming; and he found his meat cooked and ready. If he rose to go forth, there was nothing to delay him. I searched the thought that was in his heart, to save him the trouble of speaking. When I went abroad on errands for him, the chiefs and warriors smiled upon me, and the young braves spoke soft things in secret; but my feet were in the straight path, and my eyes could see nothing but him.

"When he went out to hunt, or to war, who aided to equip him but I? When he returned, I met him

at the door; I took his gun; and he entered without further thought. While he sat and smoked, I unloaded his horses; tied them to the stakes; brought in their loads, and was quickly at his feet. If his mocasins were wet, I took them off and put on others which were dry and warm. I dressed all the skins he had taken in the chase. He could never say to me, why is it not done? He hunted the deer, the antelope, and the buffalo, and he watched for the enemy. Everything else was done by me. When our people moved their camp, he mounted his horse and rode away; free as though he had fallen from the skies. He had nothing to do with the labour of the camp; it was I that packed the horses, and led them on the journey. When we halted in the evening, and he sat with the other braves and smoked, it was I that pitched his lodge; and when he came to eat and sleep, his supper and his bed were ready.

“I served him faithfully; and what was my reward? A cloud was always on his brow, and sharp lightning on his tongue. I was his dog; and not his wife.

“Who was it that scarred and bruised me? It was he. My brother saw how I was treated. His heart was big for me. He begged me to leave my tyrant and fly. Where could I go? If retaken, who would protect me? My brother was not a chief; he could not save me from blows and wounds, perhaps death. At length I was persuaded. I followed my brother from the village. He pointed the way to the Nez Percés, and bade me go and live in peace among them. We parted. On the third day I saw the lodges of the Nez Percés before me. I paused for a moment, and had no heart to go on; but my horse neighed, and I took it as a good sign, and suffered him to gallop forward. In a

little while I was in the midst of the lodges. As I sat silent on my horse, the people gathered round me, and inquired whence I came. I told my story. A chief now wrapped his blanket close around him, and bade me dismount. I obeyed. He took my horse to lead him away. My heart grew small within me. I felt, on parting with my horse, as if my last friend was gone. I had no words, and my eyes were dry. As he led off my horse, a young brave stepped forward. 'Are you a chief of the people?' cried he. 'Do we listen to you in council, and follow you in battle? Behold! a stranger flies to our camp from the dogs of Blackfeet, and asks protection. Let shame cover your face! The stranger is a woman, and alone. If she were a warrior, or had a warrior by her side, your heart would not be big enough to take her horse. But he is yours. By the right of war you may claim him; but look!—his bow was drawn, and the arrow ready!—' you never shall cross his back!' The arrow pierced the heart of the horse, and he fell dead.

"An old woman said she would be my mother. She led me to her lodge: my heart was thawed by her kindness, and my eyes burst forth with tears; like the frozen fountains in spring-time. She never changed; but as the days passed away, was still a mother to me. The people were loud in praise of the young brave, and the chief was ashamed. I lived in peace.

"A party of trappers came to the village, and one of them took me for his wife. This is he. I am very happy; he treats me with kindness, and I have taught him the language of my people. As we were travelling this way, some of the Blackfeet warriors beset us, and carried off the horses of the party. We followed, and my husband held a parley with them. The guns

were laid down, and the pipe was lighted; but some of the white men attempted to seize the horses by force, and then a battle began. The snow was deep; the white men sank into it at every step; but the red men, with their snow-shoes, passed over the surface like birds, and drove off many of the horses in sight of their owners. With those that remained we resumed our journey. At length words took place between the leader of the party and my husband. He took away our horses, which had escaped in the battle, and turned us from his camp. My husband had one good friend among the trappers. 'That is he' (pointing to the man who had asked assistance for them). "He is a good man. His heart is big. When he came in from hunting, and found that we had been driven away, he gave up all his wages, and followed us, that he might speak good words for us to the white Captain."

On the 22d of June, Captain Bonneville raised his camp, and moved to the forks of Wind River, the appointed place of rendezvous. In a few days, he was joined there by the brigade of Montero.

The united parties now celebrated the 4th of July, in rough hunters' style, with hearty conviviality; after which Captain Bonneville made his final arrangements. Leaving Montero with a brigade of trappers to open another campaign, he put himself at the head of the residue of his men, and set off on his return to civilised life, journeying along the course of the Platte from point to point until he and his band reached the frontier settlements on the 22d of August, 1835.

Here his cavalcade might have been taken for a procession of tatterdemalion savages; for the men were ragged almost to nakedness, and had contracted a wildness of aspect during three years of wandering in the

wilderness. A few hours in a populous town, however, produced a magical change. Hats of the most ample brim and longest nap; coats with buttons that shone like mirrors, and pantaloons of the most ample fulness, took the place of the well-worn trapper's equipments; and the happy wearers strolled about in all directions, scattering their silver like sailors just from a cruise.

The worthy Captain, however, by no means shared the excitement of his men, on finding himself once more in the thronged resorts of civilised life; but, on the contrary, looked back to the wilderness with regret. "To those of us," said he, "whose whole lives had been spent in the stirring excitement and perpetual watchfulness of adventures in the wilderness, the change was far from promising an increase of that contentment and inward satisfaction most conducive to happiness."

It was in the autumn of 1835, at the country seat of Mr. John Jacob Astor, the father of the fur trade on American soil, that Mr. Irving first met Captain Bonneville, who was then just returned from a residence of upwards of three years among the mountains, and was on his way to report himself at headquarters in the hope of being reinstated in the service. "By the Eternal, sir!" President Jackson is said to have exclaimed, when Bonneville showed him his map, "I'll see that you are reinstated to your command. For this valuable service to the War Department and the country you deserve high promotion."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In his later career, Bonneville served in the Seminole and Mexican wars, being made Lieutenant-Colonel for gallant and meritorious service at Contreras and Churubusco. At the close of the Civil War he was breveted Brigadier-General. He died at Fort Smith, June 12, 1878.

His wanderings in the wilderness, while they had gratified his curiosity and his love of adventure, had not much benefited his fortunes. In fact, he was too much of a frank, free-hearted soldier to make a scheming trapper or a thrifty bargainer. He was popular with his men, and a great favourite with the free trappers and Indians, who, however, sold their furs in the other camp. It was to his credit, too, that he lost not a man from his company at a time when hunters and trappers perished in considerable numbers from rival companies.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE LAST OF THE COMPANIES

THE career of Captain Bonneville in the mountains was typical of a great number of independent attempts to secure a foothold there and win some share in the fur trade. It met, too, the fate of all such individual efforts in the face of thorough organisation, experience, and a capital large enough to withstand temporary losses. Captain Bonneville, moreover, could not equal the underhand tricks of the experienced partisan; in fact, he failed whenever he tried anything of the kind. But he gathered about him an enthusiastic band of men, and welcomed all comers with lavish hospitality.

We gladly lose sight of the fact that Captain Bonneville collected few furs in the satisfaction he affords us of a glimpse at the wild life of that day through eyes that looked kindly and knew sympathy. It did not prejudice him, if the free trappers who shared his good cheer did not bring him furs. He fairly revelled in the fierce, barbaric life about him; and his camp was the cosmopolitan centre of the region.

The real success of the mountain trade belonged to General Ashley and the enterprising young men whom he led with him into the wilderness. Their movements have been repeatedly referred to in the preceding pages, and it is scarcely out of place here to remind the reader



that after General Ashley returned to St. Louis with so large a cargo of beaver skins that it set the wisest of the traders agog with excitement, he gratified his longing for a political life, selling his business to Smith, Jackson, and Sublette (1826). They in turn, in 1830, disposed of their interests to a younger set of men who had distinguished themselves for their ability and enterprise. They were Fitzpatrick, M. G. Sublette, Fraeb, Gervais, and Bridger.

Thus the Rocky Mountain Fur Company came into existence, in fact as well as in name; and it had as partners the most daring and successful leaders who were in the mountains during the four years of its existence. They devoted their efforts chiefly to obtaining beaver skins, and that almost entirely through their own trappers rather than in trade. It is reported that they shipped to St. Louis within four years over one hundred thousand beaver skins of a value in dollars five times that number. They dissolved partnership at the annual rendezvous in 1834, the time when they refused to accept the goods from Wyeth which they had ordered.

By a temporary arrangement, Fitzpatrick, Sublette, and Bridger continued the business for a time; but Fitzpatrick and Bridger soon took service individually with the American Fur Company.<sup>1</sup> The downfall of

<sup>1</sup> Bridger continued in this service until 1843, when he founded Fort Bridger for the purpose of provisioning immigrants and repairing their outfits. He was constantly employed during the next twenty years as a guide for government expeditions, for he had no equal in his knowledge of the great mountains. He long outlived even this kind of usefulness, settling late in life on a farm near Kansas City, Missouri, where he died in 1881.

the mountain trade was so evidently at hand that it was good policy for them to take shelter in the well-established river posts of their great rival.

The Rocky Mountain Fur Company was a remarkable school of exploration. Its various leaders were the first to visit the region about the sources of the Platte, Green, Yellowstone, and Snake rivers. They opened up the country about the Great Salt Lake, and penetrated thence into California and Oregon, leaving a deep impress on the geography of the West, not alone because they discovered so many important rivers, passes, and mountains, and gave permanent names to them, but because all the maps before 1840 were made up entirely from their knowledge. They encountered dangers without end, and during twelve years in the mountains they lost a hundred men from their number by violent death.

. . . . .

With the downfall of the mountain trade in 1834, amid rabid competition and bitter feuds, the American Fur Company found itself in a stronger position than any of its rivals. It had engaged in the mountain trade in order to maintain its prestige and with the hope of profit later; but it meanwhile was strengthening its foundations and getting its profits from its three strong river posts, Fort Union, Fort M'Kenzie, and Fort Cass. Over these ruled Kenneth M'Kenzie, the king of the U. M. O., the ablest trader in the employ of the company.

The advance up the Missouri had begun as early as 1828, under the leadership of M'Kenzie; and it continued for the next four years, until the posts just named were well established, and branches for trade had

been extended in every direction. All this M'Kenzie accomplished, and he strengthened his hold still more by persuading the company to build a steamboat with which to bring the supplies to the upper river posts. The first trip of the *Yellowstone* on this errand in 1831 showed the possibilities of this means of communication, though the boat did not ascend the river above Fort Tecumseh, at the mouth of what is now called the Bad River.

"The voyage of the *Yellowstone* in 1832 has been a landmark in the history of the West. It demonstrated the practicability of navigating the Missouri by steam as far as to the mouth of the Yellowstone, with a strong probability that boats could go on to the Blackfoot country. Among the passengers was the artist Catlin, whose works have given added celebrity to the voyage. The boat left St. Louis March 26, 1832. It made extremely slow progress, and did not reach Fort Tecumseh until the 31st of May. Here a delay of six days occurred, during which the new fort, built to replace the old one, was christened Fort Pierre, in honour of the distinguished trader, Pierre Chouteau, Jr., who was a passenger on the boat."<sup>1</sup>

The *Yellowstone* reached Fort Union on June 17th, and then made a quick return voyage, averaging a hundred miles a day. It reached St. Louis July 7th. The voyage aroused much interest not only in the United States but in Europe. Writing from New York, Ramsay Crooks thus addressed Mr. Chouteau upon the subject: "I congratulate you most cordially on your perseverance and ultimate success in reaching the Yellowstone by *steam*; and the future historian

<sup>1</sup> Chittenden's *History of the American Fur Trade in the Far West*, p. 340.

will preserve for you the honourable and enviable distinction of having accomplished an object of immense importance, by exhibiting the practicability of conquering the obstructions of the Missouri, considered till almost the present day insurmountable to steamboats even among those best acquainted with their capabilities. You have brought the Falls of the Missouri as near as was the River Platte in my younger days." And Mr. Astor, writing from Bellevue, France, said to Mr. Chouteau: "Your voyage in the *Yellowstone* attracted much attention in Europe and has been noted in all the papers here." <sup>1</sup>

The *Missouri Republican*, commenting on the voyage, said: "Many of the Indians who had been in the habit of trading with the Hudson Bay Company declared that the company could no longer compete with the Americans, and concluded thereafter to bring all their skins to the latter; and said that the British might turn out their dogs and burn their sledges, as they would no longer be useful while the *Fire Boat* walked on the waters." <sup>2</sup>

The stress of competition was felt along the Missouri as well as in the mountains. In dealing with the Indians, one article—whiskey—had become an absolute necessity. It was used without stint or reason by the irregular traders, and it commanded the trade with the Indians wherever it was placed. Now that Congress, in 1832, had forbidden the importation of liquor into the Indian country, M'Kenzie found himself at a great disadvantage, for he could not readily smuggle a supply past the rigid inspection of the military frontier. On the other hand, the irresponsible small trader had no

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Captain Chittenden, *History of the American Fur Trade in the Far West*, p. 341.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.



FORT UNION, A TRADING POST ON THE MISSOURI  
Redrawn from a sketch made during a Government Survey of the Pacific Railroad



great difficulty in outwitting the authorities; and once he reached the prairies he had nothing more to fear, and much to hope for.

Whiskey it was that M'Kenzie felt he must have, if he would maintain the position he had worked so hard to attain. True, Congress had said it should not be *brought* among the Indians, but that law did not prevent its being *made* there. Accordingly, when the *Yellowstone* came up the river in 1833, she brought M'Kenzie, in answer to his order, a complete outfit for distilling liquor, and with it several hundred bushels of corn, with which to begin its use.

It was this distillery in full operation that Wyeth and Cerré saw when they visited Fort Union in the course of their famous bull-boat trip during that same summer (1833). They were royally entertained by M'Kenzie; but at their departure they were so mulcted for some necessary supplies that in anger they reported the violation of the law at the first government post, Fort Leavenworth. The company had so many enemies and M'Kenzie so many rivals that the news spread with all the speed of bitter rumour throughout the country. The facts were brought up in Congress, and it was only by a bit of sharp practice that the company's license to trade among the Indians was saved from being revoked.

In saving itself the company made a scapegoat of M'Kenzie, whose usefulness was now at an end. They promised implicit obedience to all the regulations governing the trade with the Indians, and ordered the still to be destroyed. M'Kenzie came down the river in the summer of 1834. After a trip to Europe and a short visit to Fort Union in which to close up his private affairs, he settled at St. Louis, where he died in 1861.

The year 1834, besides marking the end of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, the failure of Captain Bonneville's expedition, and the forced retirement of M'Kenzie from the "U. M. O.," was a momentous year for the fur trade in other respects. The staple fur of the organised trappers and traders was the beaver, which was chiefly used for men's hats. But as early as 1832 hats were to be seen in the streets of London and Paris that were made of silk instead of beaver. In fact, so rapidly was this new style introduced that at the time of Captain Bonneville's return from the mountains (1835) the market for beaver skins had become so dull that only the finest quality of skins found sale at a profit.

It was this impending change in the character and interests of the fur trade that prompted Mr. Astor to dispose of his share in the American Fur Company, and retire from active business. He was, as he had always been since he incorporated that company in 1808, the greatest figure in the fur trade—great in wealth and greatest in sagacity. In this notable year, 1834, Mr. Astor sold the Western Department, including the Upper Missouri Outfit, to Pratte, Chouteau, and Company, and thus restored to the St. Louis traders the control of the Missouri and mountain traffic which he had wrested from them twelve years before.

The Northern Department, with its headquarters at Mackinac, Mr. Astor sold to Ramsay Crooks of Snake River fame, who had for many years been actively connected with the management of the whole company. Mr. Crooks retained the original name of the American Fur Company and became its president. He removed to New York and managed from there his many business interests.



After four years, the firm of Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company replaced that of Pratte, Chouteau, and Company (1838), and it continued to maintain the traditional dignity and reputation of the great company during the next twenty years. There was always competition to be subdued by clever tactics that were quite as often political as commercial. But the chief concern became that of constant readjustment to a constantly narrowing field of operation, until, with the death of Mr. Crooks in 1859, and of Mr. Chouteau in 1865, organised fur trading in the Far West became a thing of history.

Contrary to the general belief, the annual collection of furs from the regions described in these pages is to-day greater than it was at any time during the best years of organised trapping and trading. Many of the smaller fur-bearing animals have greatly increased in number, for they find plenty of food in the farmers' fields, and they thrive well in the half-settled condition of the country. On the other hand, the larger wild animals have almost disappeared—the beaver from his old haunts, the various species of bear and wolves have become rare, and the buffalo is practically extinct.

St. Louis remains the chief centre of the Western fur trade, as it has been from the beginning. The growth of St. Paul in this particular trade has been due to the changed methods of communication and the taking over of the furs that once found sale at Mackinac. The furs still reach these centres in large quantities and through regular channels of trade; but the pelts are secured in the first place by the individual trapper as a result of his own enterprise and efforts; and they are gathered up largely by individual traders. In Canada,

the home of organised fur trading, there are still to be seen the fur posts of the Hudson Bay Company and its old headquarters at Montreal; but in 1859 its monopoly and sovereign rights were taken away from it, and it now is exposed to any competition that may be raised against it. Its two hundred years of organisation and monopoly have, however, enabled it to maintain a considerable advantage over its rivals, and will, doubtless, preserve it for some time to come.

. . . . .

The famous Oregon Trail, in many ways the most noteworthy and remarkable road in history, was begun and developed by the early fur traders. It was first used in parts by the Astorians on their outward and returning expeditions, 1811-13. It was straightened and extended by General Ashley and his parties, one of which discovered South Pass in 1823. Both Bonneville and Wyeth from 1832-36 traversed every part of the Trail to its end at the mouth of the Columbia River. Smith in 1826 and Walker in 1833 travelled what became the Californian extension of the Trail—the road of the “Forty-niners” and the host that came after them.

Some forty miles west of the present Kansas City (then Independence) a small sign-post marked the place where the Oregon Trail branched off from the old Santa Fé road. It bore these words, “Road to Oregon.” There was nothing about that simple notice to indicate to the traveller a journey of 2020 miles, nor that as late as 1843 Fort Bridger was one of only four houses or stations in that whole distance.

The trapper was still busy along the Trail when the emigrants began to move toward Oregon. His famili-

arity with the ways and by-ways of the mountains and the plains made him a necessity to the travellers and settlers. He quickly became engaged in guiding the immigrants; he acted as scout for the soldiers; and he taught the official "pathfinders," sent tardily after by the government, all that they ever "found."

. . . . .

The spirit of adventure and gain first drew the trappers and traders into the depths of the wilderness; the fascination of the wild life held them there; and in Nature's own good time and chance they rested there.



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